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A W O M A N ' S P L A C E I N T H E V I L L A G E

An Oral History Study of Working Class Women's Lives between
1890 and 1940 in and around Broadway, Worcestershire

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CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
ABBREVIATIONS	
INTRODUCTION	i
CHAPTER 1 - A SURVEY OF RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S LIVES	1
CHAPTER 2 - BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	44
CHAPTER 3 - "PUTTING THE CHILD IN ITS PLACE"	
(a) The Home	54
(b) The Church	69
(c) Class	81
(d) School	89
(e) Leaving School	104
CHAPTER 4 - YOUTH AND WORK	
(a) Domestic Service	136
(b) Shopwork, Landwork and other Employment	150
CHAPTER 5 - WOMEN AS MOTHERS, HOUSEWIVES & MANAGERS	
(a) Marriage	161
(b) Making Ends Meet	172
(c) Women's Workplace, the Home	184
(d) Food and Clothing	204
(e) Cider and Wine Making	222
CHAPTER 6 - THE FAMILY INCOME	
(a) Men's Work	238
Married Women's paid work	
(b) - Domestic and Caring	254
(c) - Gloving	264
(d) - Field Work	274
(e) - Shopwork	281
CHAPTER 7 - LEISURE	
(a) - Men's Leisure	296
(b) - Women's and Family Leisure	304
CHAPTER 8 - WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR SECURITY - SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS	
(a) Society's Safety Net	329
(b) The Extended Family	347
CONCLUSION	371

APPENDICES - a) Questionnaire	406
b) Respondents' Biographies	409
BIBLIOGRAPHY	418

ABSTRACT

This thesis on the role of the rural working class woman, centred on the village of Broadway, Worcestershire and surrounding villages in the period 1890 - 1940, examines and develops the hypothesis that they played a key role in the social and economic functioning of their families. While they were conditioned and educated to provide a reservoir of cheap labour in a very limited variety of gender specific employments - domestic service, sewing, and some forms of field work, this study demonstrates that village women did not perceive themselves as powerless. Their housekeeping role included the power of the purse and in contrast to middle class women they, in addition to their men, were earners and providers. Their managerial role within the family and their pivotal role within the extended family provided the means by which their families could cope with low incomes and harsh living conditions.

This thesis examines all aspects of rural women's lives from the formative influences of the home, church, class, and school, to work experience, and marriage. The family's income, including men's, women's and children's contributions is examined, together with its outgoings, including housing, food and clothing, the use and avoidance of debt, and family leisure. The extent of the role of women as providers and receivers of mutual aid within the extended family is researched. Finally, a comparison is made between this research into the role of rural working class woman and research into that of her urban counterpart.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Each respondent is referred to by an abbreviated code name. These are not explained in the thesis as respondents were promised confidentiality.

INTRODUCTION

Much recent research in women's oral history has concentrated on the role of urban working-class women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In contrast this study is centred on their rural counterparts, a hitherto more neglected group in both women's and social history. While there has been a considerable amount of rural oral history research in the countryside, as Eve Hostettler as pointed out,

There has been a tendency on the part of both contemporary observers and modern historians to treat the male villager, whether farmer, labourer or craftsman, as the focal point of interest and to consign the labouring woman and the farmer's wife to the shadowy background which has resulted in scanty knowledge of the everyday life of the poor country woman.(1)

The few detailed oral history studies of country women have tended to concentrate on Eastern England.(2) This has undoubtedly been influenced by the fact that Essex University has been a pioneer in the field of oral history. In examining how economic and social changes affected women and the family in a Midlands agricultural community, it is hoped this study will add an important dimension to the knowledge of rural women's experience in the period 1890-1940 - a period of gradual change and development, both social and economic, before the drastic changes brought about by the Second World

War which put an end to much of the way of life recorded in this study.

In researching the daily domestic lives of rural working class women and their families oral evidence is vital as written documentation is sparse. Three unpublished autobiographies were, however, discovered during the interviewing process and these have been incorporated into the research material. Encouraged by this study, one of these autobiographies has since been published.(3) The advantage of concentrating on oral evidence rather than purely on written is that the former is more representative. Biographies tend to be written by the more economically successful members of the working class, and more often by men than women, for example of the large collection of autobiographies amassed by Burnett, Vincent and Mayall, less than one tenth were written by women.(4)

The methodology employed in this oral thesis was based on that recommended by Paul Thompson in The Voice of the Past - Oral History.(5) The interviews were very detailed in order to construct an accurate picture of each household. Model questions were formulated so that the question form was "open" rather than "leading" but the respondents often touched upon other topics and these "digressions" often provided the most interesting material. Respondents were usually interviewed

separately, but occasionally neighbours, married couples, and in one case a mother and daughter were interviewed together. The interviews usually lasted about three hours, but sometimes more than one interview was conducted with the respondent. The whole of the taped interview was transcribed verbatim. The transcribed material was then divided into separate headings for analysis and inclusion in the individual chapters of the study. While only two of the respondents were born before 1900, the lives of respondents' parents were researched. The time framework 1890 - 1940 was chosen in order to incorporate this material and also the detailed material available from the 1891 census.

As Paul Thompson argues, oral history allows a "more socially conscious and democratic history".(6) "It can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place."(7) The great advantage of oral sources is that the researcher can choose precisely who to interview and what questions to ask and the sources can be cross questioned. G. Ewart Evans views his respondents as "open books", but admits "I could not just leave them over. They were persons".(8) Through their personal experience, recounted in their own language, village and family life in the period studied is not only recorded but comes alive.

All historical sources are suspect, as all are the result of selective editing and interpretation of events. In this respect oral history is no more fallible or infallible than any other source. Paul Thompson compares oral evidence with Arthur Marwick's 'accepted hierarchy' of sources:

contemporary letters, informers' reports, depositions, parliamentary and press reports; social inquiries; diaries and autobiography.(9)

Thompson points out that letters, informers' reports, newspapers and autobiographies are all one-way communications and that their content has been selected with the taste of the reader in mind.(10) He notes that many of the older 'classic' sources for social historians, such as the census, registrations of birth, marriage and death; Royal Commissions and social surveys such as those of Booth and Rowntree are themselves based on contemporary interviews.(11) Thompson advises oral historians to look for "internal consistency, to seek confirmation in other sources, and to be aware of potential bias."(12) but notes that

Many questions which have to be asked of documents - whether they might be forgeries, who was their author, and for what social purpose were they produced - can be much more confidently answered for oral evidence, especially when it comes from a historian's own field-work, than for documents.(13)

The opportunity to cross question respondents is the great advantage of oral history which is sadly lacking with all other sources. Written records often prove frustrating in this respect. For example, in order to ascertain the fate of three

children sent to the workhouse from Childswickham School, a search was made into the records of the Evesham Union Workhouse. It was found that one of the girls was listed in the death register. This entry, however, had been crossed out, but no further mention could be found of the child.(14)

Many respondents commented that they could remember their childhood homes and lives with more clarity than they could recall what they were doing yesterday. Paul Thompson notes that psychologists recognise this vivid emergence of memories and a desire to remember as part of the "life review" commonly experienced by the elderly.(15) People's memories are not perfect, but by providing a wide sample of interviews it is possible to check and counter-check the statements made. As Melvyn Bragg points out in Speak for England, oral research is least successful in obtaining evidence of national and international events which do not have a direct bearing on the respondent's life or family. Thus "Poverty in the Thirties to a woman with six children would not be in terms of coalition governments and social legislation and trade union demands, but soup-kitchens, shoes for the family, the memory of a day's outing to the seaside - the common body of daily life."(16) It is this that makes the evidence of oral history so interesting. It presents history from a totally different perspective, turned inside out as it were.

Government Commissions and other reports of the period (see footnote 17) present a picture of the extent of rural poverty, but oral evidence demonstrates how individual families coped with this, and, as Eve Hostettler has pointed out it also demonstrates that there was a variety in the living standards and in the position of women in families within the arbitrary statistical groups "labouring poor", "small farmers" and "market gardeners".(18) In addition to the use of contemporary reports and census material, primary sources such as school log books, the Evesham Union's Workhouse records, and parish council minutes were used, together with such sources on the local economy as the Evesham Journal, the agricultural records of the Evesham Almonry Museum, and the Evesham Historical Society. Two published local autobiographies of the period, A Village Remembered, Maurice Andrews (1971); and Cotswold Lad, Sidney Knight (1961) were also used.

Authenticity in such factual questions as wages and housing conditions can be verified by comparisons with such written sources as government enquiries and independent observers, but social viewpoints are more difficult to confirm. When interviewing the elderly there is the possibility that views of events which took place sixty, seventy or even eighty years ago may become distorted to make them conform to changing values and norms in today's society. For example, it was expected this might be the case when asking respondents about

their mothers' contemporary views on the women's suffrage question. However, it was interesting that all those interviewed, without exception and whatever their present views, replied that this was a subject which had no interest for their mothers or themselves in the period when this controversy was raging.

Such national controversies had little bearing on their lives which centred, economically, culturally and emotionally on their families, and were totally identified with them. It was thus necessary to include information on all members of the family within the scope of the study. Women's lives were circumscribed by their family, their village and its surroundings. Travel outside the local area was uncommon except for the school leaver seeking work in service.

In the conclusion a comparison of the findings of this local rural study is made with the findings of wider studies on working class women in the period in both urban and rural contexts which are outlined in Chapter 1, the Survey of Research.

It is hoped that this study, by recording how women and their families coped with the struggle against poverty, and by giving this information a lasting shape which can be communicated to others interested in the fields of oral,

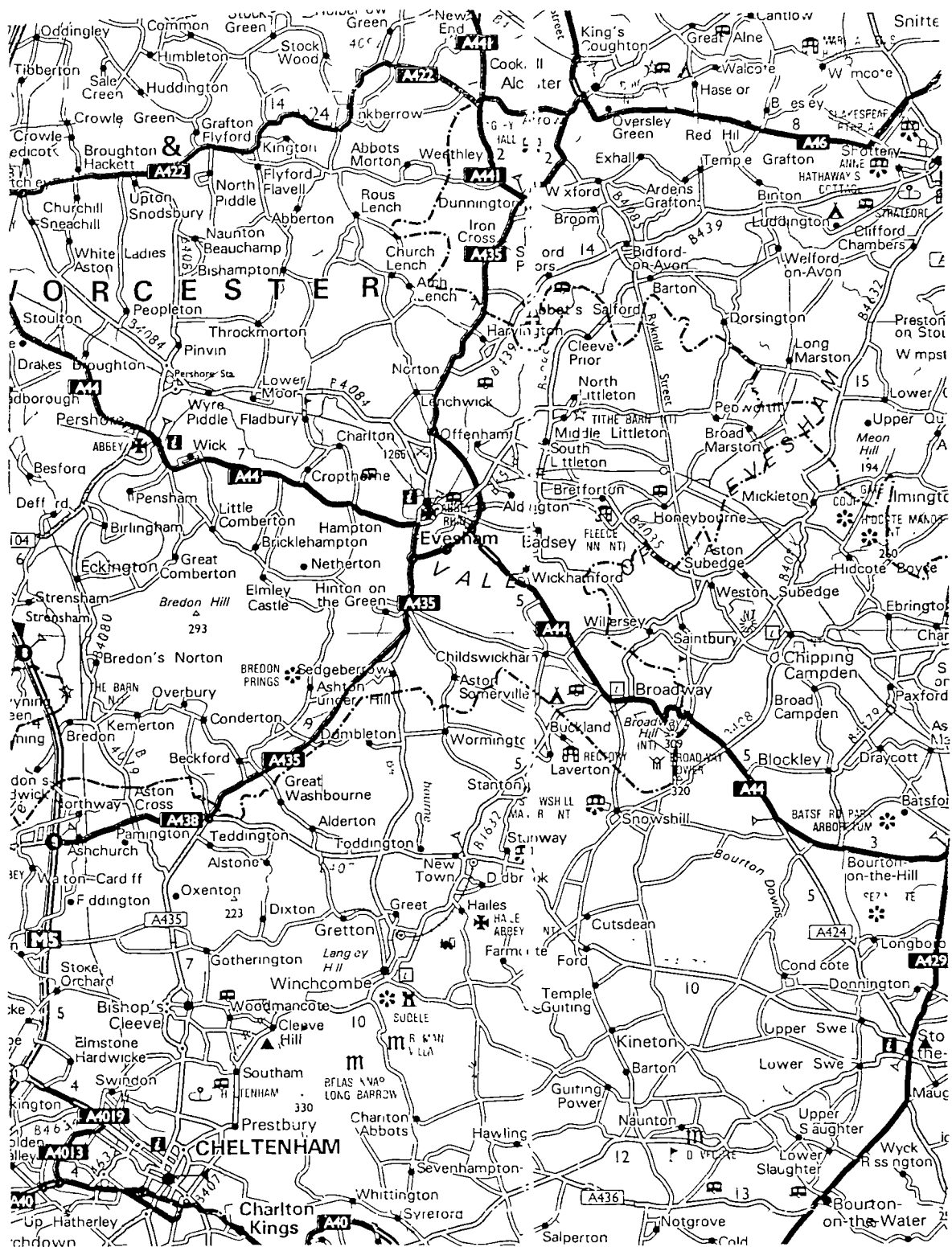
agricultural, and women's history, will prove a small tribute to their often hard but courageous lives.

Footnotes to Introduction

1. E. Hostettler, 'Making Do': Domestic Life Among East Anglian Labourers, 1890-1910, in (eds.) Leonore Davidoff and Belinda Westman, Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words, (1986), p. 36.
2. Ibid, and Mary Chamberlain, Fen Women, (1975).
3. Bob Hodge, Cotswold Born n'Bred, (Evesham 1993)
4. J. Burnett, D. Vincent and D. Mayall (eds.), The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated Critical Bibliography.
5. P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past, (Second Edition, Oxford, 1988).
6. P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past, (First Edition, Oxford 1979), p.X.
7. Ibid, p.2.
8. Ibid, quoted p.17.
9. P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past, (Second Edition, Oxford, 1988), p.101.
10. Ibid, p. 104.
11. Ibid, p. 104.
12. P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past, (First Edition, Oxford 1979), p.92
13. Ibid, p.92
14. Evesham Union Workhouse Records, Worcestershire Records Office.
15. P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past, (First Edition 1979), p.113.
16. M. Bragg, Speak for England, p. 7.

17. For example: The Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1881; The Report on the Condition of the Agricultural Labourer, 1893-4; R. Haggard, Rural England, (1902); B. S. Rowntree and May Kendall, How the Labourer Lives, (1913).
18. E. Hostettler, 'East Anglian Labourers, 1890-1910', Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words, (1986), p. 52.

MAP OF AREA SHOWING LOCATION OF VILLAGES



CHAPTER 1 - A SURVEY OF RESEARCH INTO WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S LIVES

The growing interest in women's history has stimulated a substantial amount of research into the lives of working class women, but, as mentioned in the introduction, this has tended to concentrate on urban women. While the aim of this study centres on researching women's lives in the countryside, it is necessary to look at the literature on women and family life in an urban as well as rural context in order to determine similarities and differences in their strategies to cope with poverty. Jane Miller and Caroline Glendinning point out that class as much as gender was fundamental in determining women's life chances and strategies(1) and therefore most research has divided women's experience into that of working class and middle class, assuming that class had more bearing on their life chances and style than the urban or rural context in which they lived. One of the major aims of this study is to test this assumption.

A controversial area in research is the influence of the church on working class families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Standish Meacham argues that as religion, "lost whatever slim hold it may have had upon the urban working class, men and women awakened to the thought that redress, if not vengeance, might be theirs, not the Lord's". He notes that the church had offered a limited range of social services in return "for nominal loyalty", providing "little further sustenance to

the majority".(2) Elizabeth Roberts's research, however, demonstrates that its influence remained strong in the urban areas of the north-west of England.(3) Pamela Horn notes that the "Established Church remained strong in the rural areas at a time when its authority in towns was already under attack" and that its influence extended to "the spheres of education, charity, and the administration of justice, since many clergymen were also Justices of the Peace."(4) Joseph Arch, the rural labourers' union organiser, attacked the Church of England sharply for representing aristocratic and middle class interests as opposed to the interests of the rural working class.(5)

The influence of the family in the social and moral education of the working class child has been researched by oral historians. Both Thea Thompson and Elizabeth Roberts stress the "habit of obedience" inculcated by parents early in life, reinforced usually by corporal punishment.(6) Children were expected to help their families from early childhood. Carol Dyhouse writes that in the home "as soon as they were capable, children were recruited into these activities in a way which was often highly sex-specific."(7) She quotes autobiographical accounts which complain that mothers treated their daughters more harshly than their sons. Flora Thompson's Lark Rise confirmed this preferential treatment.(8)

Much research has recently been undertaken in the field of girls' education. While headmistresses like Miss Buss and Miss Beale were pioneering a new kind of education for the middle classes, which promoted the desirability of educating women to be cultivated wives and mothers in addition to tackling the "surplus women" problem by providing training by which single women could earn their living, for the working class community schooling for girls remained extremely basic.

Carol Dyhouse feels that historians of women's education have neglected the schooling of the working class. She argues with those such as Dorothy Gardiner who "assumed erroneously that the education of the elementary schoolgirl was substantially the same as that of an elementary schoolboy".(9) While both sexes shared the basic lessons - vocational training was strictly segregated. By training in practical carpentry, gardening and land measurement, boys were prepared for their role as breadwinners. Girls' education prepared them for their roles as domestic servants, and later wives and mothers. Despite the moves towards compulsory elementary education in the 1880s, Carol Dyhouse sees working-class girls' schooling as a "fairly short-term experience" which was "commonly bitten into and ultimately curtailed by the much more real and pressing needs of the family".(10) She views the aims of the church and state's educational policies as essentially to "civilise" the working

class and to bring the organisation of family life into line with "middle-class values and canons of respectability".(11)

Annmarie Turnbull in her article on the work of women members of the London School Board, 1870-1904 comments that the vast majority of all school board members were middle class, and thus the education system was "firmly dominated by a class that did not use it themselves".(12) Pamela Horn argues that their policy reflected the view that too much learning for working class children was considered not only unnecessary but as potentially dangerous.(13) According to Cunningham, the children themselves often agreed, "school, indeed for most children was something to be escaped from as soon as possible".(14)

The middle class philosophy urged that poverty "could be cured through thrift and careful housekeeping" rather than higher wages, and emphasized the importance of cookery and needlework. Carol Dyhouse points out, "The inference to be drawn from this was that working-class women were poor cooks and improvident housekeepers."(15) She also notes these were the very skills required for girls in order to supply the middle-class demand for domestic servants.(16) While traditionally charity schools, reformatories and orphanages were often founded to produce well-trained servant girls, "middle-class opinion believed that State elementary schools should also set out to train girls for service". "The suggestion was often mooted that Board Schools

should encourage their girls pupils to enter service as 'more fitting' or 'more natural' for young unmarried women than factory, shop or office." (17) Dyhouse points out that textbooks in domestic economy used in the 1890s and 1900s extolled the advantage of service as training for the working-class girl's future as mother. In a textbook written for domestic science teachers at the turn of the century, Newsholme and Scott urged that

Teachers should, when possible, advise mothers to encourage their daughters to become good domestic servants in preference to entering upon indifferent callings which frequently entail late hours, injury to health and exposure to temptation. (18)

Gill Blunden has researched domestic economy courses in Gloucestershire where such courses were developed extensively after 1891 by the Cookery Committee, which was concerned with the provision of cookery, laundry and dressmaking classes in the county and the development of the Gloucester School of Cookery and Domestic Economy in the city. This latter institution provided a two-year course for domestic science teachers and three-month courses for girls entering domestic service. The training of domestic servants was seen as an important and necessary part of the committee's work. (19)

The importance of this training wants to be brought more before mothers of girls just leaving school. In no other profession, if we may so call it, is the work undertaken without preparation and yet our women are expected to become model house-keepers, cooks, dressmakers, sick-nurses, by intuition, an expectation hardly, if ever, realised, as all acquainted with domestic life among the poor, or indeed among all classes can testify. (20)

Blunden views the increase of instruction in domestic subjects as a result of the local authority "acting in the interest of national efficiency and of the middle classes" and she argues that the concern with the ability of working-class women to become "adequate wives and mothers was no more than a justification to keep the local middle classes supplied with residential domestic servants."(21)

Dyhouse claims that in the first two decades of the twentieth century "the obsession with Empire and 'national efficiency' were bound up with a complex of anxieties about the quantity and quality of the population" to generate powerful pressures to widen the scope of domestic training.(22) Despite the introduction of the sewing machine, hand sewing assumed a symbolic importance as representing domestic skill; "Proficiency with a needle implied femininity, it implied thrift".(23) By 1878 domestic economy was made a compulsory subject for girls, and facilities for the teaching of cooking and laundry work were added. The Board report, *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools*, published in 1905, drew attention to the importance of a thorough training in domestic duties. It urged girls must "be taught 'to set a high value on the housewife's position', on the grounds that national efficiency must inevitably depend upon a strong tradition of home life"(24) Childcare was also introduced into the curriculum. Infant mortality was blamed not on poverty

or poor housing but "the ignorance of the mother" and the remedy was to educate schoolgirls for motherhood.(25)

On the other hand, according to the oral evidence collected by Elizabeth Roberts of girls' experiences in Barrow and Lancaster between 1890 and 1914, such domestic training at school was thought to be artificial and a waste of time as compared to the apprenticeship given by mothers in the home. This provides an example of oral evidence refuting the middle class conceptions of working class home life.(26) Such a practical apprenticeship in domesticity had its drawbacks. Anna Davin has demonstrated that double standards were applied by many authorities in dealing with truancy. Girls' absences, caused by having to care for their younger siblings, were accepted.(27)

The First World War had expanded the opportunities for employment for women, but as Lewis points out these "proved largely transitory". When men returned from the war, women returned to their traditional employment. Even by the end of the 1930s, work was still low-paid, and "undertaken to assist the family exchequer rather than for its own sake", while a "formidable ideology of motherhood stressed the importance of home, childbearing and childrearing."(28)

Much research has been undertaken into the two main occupations available for full-time employment for working class

women: domestic work and textile manufacture. In 1901, 42 per cent of women were employed in service, while 14 per cent were textile workers. By 1931 there was an expansion of jobs in the clerical field but 35 per cent of women were still employed in service, and 10 per cent as textile workers.(29) As work in the textile factories was an urban occupation, the research in this area will not be considered here except in its influence on employment in service.

Jane Lewis states that domestic service and fieldwork remained the only two options open to the majority of rural women until after World War II.(30) As soon as they were legally able to leave school, pressure was exerted for girls to leave home for domestic service, "Poor mothers were often anxious for their daughters 'to get their feet under someone else's table' as soon as possible.(31) The autobiography of Flora Thompson underlines this point. A girl "was made to feel herself one too many in the overcrowded home; while her brothers, when they left school and began to bring home a few shillings weekly, were treated with a new consideration..The girls, while at home, could earn nothing."(32) The search for domestic employment involved a mass migration to the towns. Theresa McBride notes that while many more men than women emigrated overseas, within Britain there was more female than male migration.(33)

Government support of the notion that domestic service was the natural place for working class girls was consistent throughout the period from Victorian England up until the Second World War. Lewis notes that domestic service saw a resurgence during the interwar years because during the Depression it was one of the few sectors which experienced a labour shortage. She contends that this was "exploited by successive governments in their policies towards unemployed women, which were designed either to force women back into service, or to make them retrain as servants." (34) After the First World War which provided girls with the choice of other occupations, the report of a Women's Advisory Committee to investigate 'the domestic service problem' for the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1919 recommended the provision of more facilities for training girls for domestic work. Jane Lewis found that while the Central Committee for Women's Employment which was established during World War I was provided with funds in 1920 to organise training in horticulture, hairdressing, journalism and domestic work, by 1921 "its grant was tied exclusively to domestic service training" (35) and domestic service was the only job for which a retraining scheme was offered to unemployed women during the inter-war period. (36)

Lewis notes that criticisms of the paternalistic and deferential relations which characterised such work were more common during the interwar years. Few chose to enter service

where alternative employment was available.(37) Standish Meacham writes that the tradition of entering service "was far stronger in rural villages than in urban working class neighbourhoods; recruits came with far greater frequency from the country than from the city".(38) In the textile districts of the industrial north, access to wages in the mill gave young women greater independence. Elizabeth Roberts notes that service "seems to have lost status in the eyes of some working women".(39) Already by 1906 Cadbury reports that "among working girls there is a strong prejudice against service."(40) He feels they would be "far healthier in service than they are in factories, but sympathises with "the girls' objection to loss of liberty."(41) In 1916 the Women's Industrial Council commented on the "social stigma attached to such employment amongst the urban population".(42)

However Patricia Branca notes that "the fact that hundreds of thousands of girls continued to pour into servanthood well into the twentieth century suggests the ongoing attractions of the job" although she adds the important qualification "at least among available alternatives.(43) She points out in its favour that women who "by desire or necessity" made service a permanent career could climb in the servant hierarchy, whereas in most alternate employment they did not acquire the job experience or skills necessary to advance.(44) Meacham agrees that "within its upper reaches an occasional opportunity for advancement" was

open to the most intelligent domestic servants.(45) C. V. Butler in her survey of pre-war domestic service in Oxford argued that for many young women domestic service might provide greater earnings and security than she would obtain as a factory hand (however she adds 10 or 12 shillings a week as compensation for food, lodgings and washing).(46)

Jennie Kitteringham draws attention to the inconsistency of middle class attitudes towards the exploitation of female working class labour. She points out that while enquiries into women's employment in factories, mines and agriculture had been undertaken, there was a "notable absence of any enquiry into the working conditions and environment of their female servants" in Victorian England despite their often harsh and gruelling tasks and long hours. She felt that such an enquiry into what was the major area of female employment "would have been viewed as an attack and questioning of the accepted and expected pattern of social and sexual differences (inequalities) that were inherent to that society and time, and upon which the entire social order was based".(47) Thus the advantages were stressed of such work being proper woman's work which would serve as an apprenticeship for the domestic's later role as wife and mother. The advantages of mixing with a higher class of people were pointed out. The servant could absorb their supposedly higher moral standards which would help her become a "better and more moral female".(48) However, as Meacham points out, the risk to her morals by being

"employed in a 'proper' upper-middle-class household" was "far greater than what she might expect in factory or workshop".(49)

It is interesting to contrast the approval of the "moral benefits" of service, with the moral disapproval of any alternative means by which working class girls could earn their living. Factory work was stigmatised by reformers who stressed "the sexual vulnerability of women in factories, prey to the advances of their bosses".(50) Glove-making, though poorly paid, could give a country girl a certain independence. In the Commissioners Report on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture 1868-9, the Reverend Mr. Salmon of Martock deplored the character of the gloving girls:

They grow up in a state of deplorable ignorance, very few of them being able to write their own names. At an early age they become independent of their parents and submit to no control, even when it is exercised judiciously. The evil-disposed at once go out to lodge, if their parents will not allow them to keep late hours; their morality is very low, their ignorance excessive.(51)

Writing about Somerset, Commissioner Boyle agreed.

In the purely agricultural districts girls go out to farm service, and few are at home after 13 or 14 years of age; in this district few go out to service; they like the independence of gloving, and either they stay at home and crowd the cottages or go out to lodge, and worse forms of immorality result. I was surprised at hearing from many competent witnesses that the women who work in the fields bear a higher character, as a rule, than either the glovers or the factory hands.(52)

Shelley Pennington and Belinda Westover note that while homework was approved for married women because it confined them to their "proper place", whenever single girls "could earn

slightly more than bare subsistence wages, whether in factory, field or home, their 'betters' began to express great concern about their moral welfare. The ever-present fear was that remunerative work would make women feel independent of, or at least equal to, their menfolk".(53) Thus Mrs. Henry Wood in her novel Mrs. Haliburton's Troubles, set in a glove manufacturing district, approves of gloving as "one of the very few employments that furnish to their poor female population easy, clean and profitable work at their own homes", but disapproves of the unmarried girls being able to deck themselves out with their earnings, purchasing flowers and ribbons on their bonnets, and "a-setting the churches and chapels alight with their finery".(54)

Field work, like gloving, was subject to the wrath of the "separate spheres" advocates. Karen Sayers has pointed out that the way in which women's labour was represented in parliamentary reports reflected the changing definitions of femininity throughout the 19th century.(55) Thus in 1843 women's field work was represented as "physically healthy and economically necessary", but twenty years later the economic independence it entailed was roundly condemned as immoral (although the total "dependence on the man" which was advocated was not an economically viable option).

That which seems most to lower the moral or decent tone of the peasant girls is the sensation of independence of society which they acquire when they have remunerative labour in their hands, either in the fields or at home as straw-plaiters etc.

All gregarious employment gives a slang character to the girls' appearance and habits, while dependence on the man for support is the spring of modest and pleasing deportment.(56)

This view was reiterated by the First Report of the Commissioners on The Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture in 1867. Landwork could "almost unsex a woman", and "generates a further very pregnant social mischief by unfitting or indisposing her for a woman's proper duties at home". The report lambasts female field workers and blames them for all manner of social evils - "immorality, miscarriage, neglect of nursing infants by mothers, and drugging them with opium by the persons with whom they are left".(57)

Marriage was the only strategy by which young women could hope to attain independence from their parents or from service. Jane Lewis points out that working class girls' low wages (averaging 12/11d in 1906 in non-textile industries) meant that they could not afford an independent existence.(58) The picture presented of working class family life is bleak. Marriage in the period before the Second World War is viewed as an economic necessity requiring "financial obligations, services and activities that were gender specific" rather than an affectionate partnership.(59) It is seen in terms of a "labour contract".(60) Ellen Ross saw working class marriage as a contract between a husband to bring in a wage and a wife to manage household and children.(61)

The position of working class women is seen as part of the conditioning of all women, marriage being the only accepted means of livelihood for women of all classes. Despite the expansion of semi-professional employment opportunities for single middle class women during the inter-war years, dependence on the family was reinforced during this period for married women of all social classes by government policy and any lack of alternative occupation.(62) The middle class ideology of female dependency helped to exclude married women from the labour market and enhance men's negotiations for a larger "family" wage. It is argued that this ideology of dependency resulted in legitimising women's poverty.(63)

Jane Lewis writes that "irrespective of the different behaviour of women in different *social classes*, *policymakers* legislated on matters affecting primarily poor families as if the ideology of separate spheres was actually reflected in the behaviour of all women". She quotes Helen Bosanquet, a leading member of the most influential voluntary organization concerned with poor relief between 1870 and 1910, the Charity Organisation Society, as viewing the male breadwinner family model as "the only known way of ensuring with any approach to success that one generation will exert itself in the interests and for the sake of another." (64)

The simplicity and economy of the working class marriage ceremony in the period before the Second World War has been interpreted as demonstrative of the "prosaic attitudes" of the couples towards marriage.(65) When members of the working class are queried directly however a different picture emerges. John Burnett's study of working class autobiographies demonstrates clearly that affection as well as calculation was important,(66) and oral history findings such as Elizabeth Roberts support this view.(67)

Lewis cites economic constraints as the dominating factor which influenced women's priorities and strategies. A good husband was defined as one who made regular contributions to the family exchequer.(68) During the last decade a debate has emerged concerning the assessment of the role of women as household managers, a role which contemporary social investigators such as Henry Higgs and Helen Bosanquet believed to be pivotal.(69) Pat Ayers and Jan Lambertz view this managing role as a domestic burden to "make ends meet" imposed upon women by their family's poverty.(70) Jill Liddington and Jill Norris also view this role as a exacting one.(71)

Roberts, in her oral study of working-class women in north-west Lancashire, however, views this role positively and has stressed the power it gave women as economic managers within the family economy.(72) Standish Meacham agrees that on the wife's

"ability to manage with very little - no less than upon the husband's success in bringing home as much as he could - depended the family's very survival."(73)

Just how hard was life for working class women and how much did it improve within the period 1890-1940? Carol Dyhouse views the lives of women after marriage in the Edwardian period as extremely harsh. "Large numbers of working-class women were prematurely aged and worn out by yearly childbearing and the toll this took on their bodies and spirits, particularly when the family's well-being was constantly threatened by a shortage of nourishing food. This sometimes engendered bitterness; more often, perhaps a grim fatalism - an acceptance of the amply demonstrated fact that the world was a joyless place for women.."(74) "Where women bore large families in poverty and poor conditions, self-sacrifice was built into the physical facts of their existence. Women stinted on food that their husbands and children might be fed."(75) This is born out by D. J. Oddy's investigation of working class diets in late nineteenth-century Britain in which he declares "essentially the women's diet was one of bread and tea, while almost all men consumed a main meal of meat or bacon or fish and potatoes.(76) Rowntree points out the extent of poverty amongst the rural working class. While meat figured daily in most of the homes analysed, it tended to be set aside for the chief bread winner.(77)

A. Armstrong has criticised Rowntree's work for failing to give full weight to wives' incomes from such homework as glove-making.(78) However, Armstrong agrees about the extent of poverty and quotes a comparison of rural and urban workers' household budgets carried out by the Ministry of Labour in 1937-8 to demonstrate that total rural income and expenditure remained lower than in urban areas (57s 4d vs. 85s 0d per week).(79) While, as expected, food expenditure was lower for rural workers, more was spent on the staples, bread and flour.

The contemporary study, Maternity: Letters from Working Women (1915) by the Women's Cooperative Guild points out the high levels of morbidity amongst women as a result of childbirth during the First World War.(80) In the country as a whole the birth-rate had been declining from the late-Victorian period. The population was still increasing in the Edwardian period (from 41,500,000 for the whole United Kingdom in 1901 to almost 45,250,000 in 1911) but this was the result of a fall in the death-rate. The 1911 Census report warned of the implications of a declining proportion "of workers at the most economic efficient ages" and of the implications for Britain's military and imperial might as the supply of recruits was reduced.(81)

Sidney Webb's tract "The Decline of the Birth-Rate" complained that the falling off in the birth-rate deprived England and Wales of some 200,000 babies a year and noted that it is "exceptionally

marked where there is foresight and thrift". He claimed that "volitional regulation of the marriage state is demonstrably at work in many different parts of Great Britain, among all social grades except probably the poorest." (82) The ideology of eugenics therefore claimed that it was not only the quantity of babies which was wanting, but also the quality, for the "wrong" people were breeding and "there was a common belief in the biological inheritance of intelligence and morality". (83) In answer to these criticisms the title Marie Stopes chose for her birth control society, "The Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress" reflected her argument that birth control would not necessarily lead to small families but rather better planned and healthier families. (84)

The fall in the size of working class families eventually followed the pattern set by the middle class from the 1870s onwards, only this occurred several decades later. Lewis' analysis of statistics demonstrates that the number of births to families of male manual workers was 25 per cent higher than those to non-manual families at the end of the nineteenth century and this widened to 42 per cent for the period 1910-1924. (85) The families of agricultural labourers were particularly large in relation to other groups. Armstrong notes that the Edwardian farmworker had 14 per cent more children than the average parent, and raised 18 per cent more children than average. (86) The gap between working class fertility and that of other classes was

widest just before the First World War. Thus in the first decade of the century 55 per cent of women had three or more children and 25 per cent had more than 5; by the 1940s this rate had been reduced to 30 per cent and 9 per cent respectively.(87) In the interwar period the average family for all couples fell to just over two.

In his 1935 budget speech Chancellor of the Exchequer Neville Chamberlain made a public appeal for more babies to support Britain's role as an imperial power.(88) Birth control was beginning to be more common in the 1930s though, fearful of the economic and military implications of a drop in population, the government was committed to a policy of allowing doctors to give contraceptive advice only to women whose health might suffer from further pregnancies.(89) Only 95 out of 423 maternal and child welfare centres included birth control clinics by 1937. Armstrong's research shows that the birth rate among agricultural workers fell by 21 per cent between 1921 and 1931, though he notes this was under half that recorded for semi-skilled textile workers (a 43 per cent fall) or miners (50 per cent).(90)

Did the decrease in family size result in women enjoying better health? In the 1930s, when what Jane Lewis terms "the class differential in fertility" had all but disappeared, the maternal mortality rate remained high. It peaked at 7.5 per thousand in 1918 due to influenza and sepsis, fell to under 5 per

thousand in 1921 and then rose again above the figure of 5 per thousand and remained at or above this figure until 1935.(91) Lewis points out that this was the only major cause of death to show an increase during the inter-war period, and states that as motherhood was "sacred and a women's prime duty" the local authorities responsible for providing services under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 found this politically difficult to handle.(92) She notes that the response of the medical profession to maternal mortality was to advocate hospital delivery. The proportion of births taking place in hospital rose from 15 per cent in 1927 to 35 per cent in 1937.(93) However, Lewis points out that the extent of general ill-health amongst working class women was overlooked. She contends that "had health officials investigated the amount of morbidity rather than mortality among women, they would have been forced to confront the problem of poverty".(94) R. M. Titmuss showed that in the interwar period the gap in mortality rates between the richest and the poorest classes was actually rising.(95)

Despite the persistence of high mortality rates in childbirth, the standard of living certainly improved for most working class women. Titmuss draws attention to the contrast between the average working-class woman of the 1890s who experienced ten pregnancies and spent 15 years of her adult life in either pregnancy or nursing, and her counterpart in the 1930s who spent four years either pregnant or nursing.(96) The middle class

social commentator Maud Pember Reeves described the life of the Edwardian working class wife in dire tones in 1913. She describes the housewife with five or six children living in a couple of rooms with no domestic water supply, primitive toilet and cooking arrangements, struggling to balance an irregular income of 'round about a pound a week', supplementing the family income with homework, charring or washing, or resorting to the pawnshop, and in final desperation, to the Poor Law Guardians for relief.(97) Patricia Branca notes that at the turn of the century 61 per cent of adults on all forms of poor relief were women.(98)

According to Margery Spring Rice, however, the improvement in the quality of women's lives towards the end of the period (1939) was not as dramatic as might have been expected. Her study on working class wives still presents a dismal picture of health and living conditions.(99) Standish Meacham, however, would qualify such evidence. He contends that much evidence about workers' lives has been filtered through "middle-class perception", thus middle class investigators such as Maude Pember Reeves, Margery Spring Rice, Charles Booth, Seebohm Rowntree, and Clementina Black were not just recording facts but fighting for reform by pointing out "the extent of hidden poverty in the midst of apparent plenty; the degree of working-class female servitude in a period caught up in the middle-class struggle for female emancipation."(100)

Elizabeth Roberts's oral studies reveal that despite the harsh poverty, urban working class women experienced a deep satisfaction in their 'place' because they did not seek self-fulfilment. They were conditioned to be "disciplined, inhibited, conforming" and to place "perceived familial and social needs before those of the individual" and saw little distinction between their own good and that of their families. She found there was a very low level of self-awareness. "Women's considerable powers were all exercised, firmly, in the perceived interests of their families".(101) Robert Roberts's autobiographical books, The Classic Slum and A Ragged Schooling and Angela Hewins's The Dillens, Memories of a Man of Stratford upon Avon, also portray working class women not as passive victims, but as people accepting the constraints of their harsh lives and making the best of them.(102)

Eve Hostettler argues that while life was harsh for the urban working class, it was an even a harder daily struggle for survival for the families of many of the rural labouring poor at the turn of the century.

The level of farm labourers' wages, the condition of many cottages, the lack of amenities to the countryside such as paved roads, piped water and drains, all indicate a relatively low standard of living for the majority of people in the countryside in comparison with urban areas. It has also been acknowledged that the greatest burden of this struggle for existence fell, not upon the labourer himself, but on his wife, or widow, who every day faced the task of providing her family with the necessities of life out of the meagre income and sparse facilities of the household.(103)

Because of the rural exodus to better paid employment in the towns, the plight of the agricultural labourer received considerable attention from the government during the period from 1906 up to the First World War. The Board of Trade carried out exhaustive surveys of the wages, housing, food and earnings of agricultural workers, but they paid scant attention to the earnings of women and children. In the summary of the findings of the Board of Trade inquiry for 1906, for example, their contributions to the family budget were relegated to the following few sentences, tucked away after the contributions of pigs, poultry, eggs and produce had been considered,

Further, the wives may earn something at farm work at busy seasons, particularly in the fruit-, flower-, and hop-growing districts, or by doing a little charring, or by taking in a little washing. In certain districts the wives and daughters of farm labourers have opportunities of earning money by taking work from clothing, glove, or other factories. Married women, however, particularly those with very young children at home, are often prevented from earning money, owing to their domestic duties. The children may also earn a little occasionally..(104)

Similarly census records often ignore married women's paid labour in both urban and rural areas because many working class women's occupations were unorganised or temporary or because wives aided their husbands in their businesses. It is, therefore, necessary to supplement the official census figures with the evidence of oral history if a true picture of working class women's participation in the work force is to be presented. As Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenback point out in their study of women's work in Scotland, "When other sources are used to

supplement official census figures, it becomes clear that work was a common, if intermittent, experience for married women." and such new sources reveal "the deficiencies of the census itself, which tended to omit casual, part-time and seasonal work, that is, the kind of work likely to be undertaken by married women." (105)

Patricia Branca evidently bases her assumptions on census material when she maintains that with the exception of the textile manufacturing areas, "the working-class family well into the twentieth century maintained itself on the wage of the husband and older children alone. (106) Alan Armstrong agrees that by the later nineteenth century "the role of women was becoming confined to home-making" although he notes "islands of busy domestic outwork still existed, notably gloving in the Yeovil district and around Worcester". He also maintains that the role of married women in agriculture was not declining at the same rate of that of unmarried women and notes a study of wage books in Gloucestershire which indicates that the labour of farmworkers' wives has been massively under-recorded. (107)

Jane Lewis argues that while full-time married women workers formed only about 10 per cent of the labour force between 1911 and the outbreak of World War II, if casual work is taken into account, "A literally incalculable number of wives and their children were engaged in work". (108) She cites homeworkers

making matchboxes, shirts, artificial flowers, umbrellas, brushes, carding buttons, furplucking, bending safety pins and covering tennis balls, as well as what Shelley Pennington has termed "extended homework": taking in washing and lodgers, charring, and babysitting.(109) Patricia Branca notes that while some domestic manufactures, such as lacemaking and strawplaiting, required training, these were dying out after the First World War.(110) However, Shelly Pennington and Belinda Westover maintain that gloving, the important home industry in Worcestershire, was often carried on well into the twentieth century.(111) They point out that the 1901 Act to protect homeworkers was ineffective as it proved impossible "to regulate what in many ways is an invisible sector of the economy" and that such homework depended on the reservoir of married women's labour, which could expand and contract as the market dictated.(112) Children were often employed and the cost of supervision and training fell on the mother. They argue that in the industrial North where even after marriage many women could still find work in the mills, no such captive, passive labour force was available and thus homework was a rarity.(113)

Caroline Glendinning argues that the types of work carried out by women at home without pay are reflected in types of work which women did in the labour market for low pay - work which involved caring for or servicing others.(114) Both as single and as married workers, women's gender-related roles were transferred

from the home to the workplace, and their work was thus low-paid, low-status and largely unprotected by legislation.(115) Susan Lonsdale comments, "It is not surprising to find wages in industries such as catering, clothing, laundry and cleaning are very low, nor that women are concentrated in such jobs".(116)

Cadbury in his study of Birmingham in 1906 wrote of the "army of charwomen available" and comments that many women combine charring with taking in washing, these two what he terms "extended domestic occupations" being the most common strategies for "nearly every untrained woman who has fallen upon evil times if she is unable to go to a factory".(117) He noted that many of the charwomen had been domestic servants, and "bitterly regret this fact in after-life because they say that had they learnt a trade they would have been better equipped for taking their share in the struggle to keep the home: their relatives are apt to think they feel their difficulties and privations more keenly because of the immunity they enjoyed from such anxieties while in service: on the other hand, many of them have learnt thrifty household ways and are excellent managers."(118) He also noted that in home sewing and machining "all the skilled work is undertaken either by those who have been properly trained, or by girls who have been in service."(119) His investigation into outwork in Birmingham contested the premise that married women worked for "pocket-money", (only 04 per cent in his survey did so). The most frequent reason given was that the husband's wage

- at best 18s. per week - was either too small or too irregular to keep the family. Home-workers he found were the reverse of the general rule "obtaining inside the factories". Only a few are young girls who work with their mothers or elderly spinsters, the majority are married women or widows.(120)

After his research in Birmingham, Cadbury rejected Rowntree's figure of 21s 8d as the minimum necessary expenditure per week for a family of five in pre-World War I York. He reckons that 25s. per week "can hardly suffice for providing efficient conditions, even taking for granted the low standard of comfort of working-class life". This he argued proved "the necessity, as conditions are now, for the woman to become a bread-winner even where the husband is described as 'fairly steady'." Labourers' wages he cited were only "up to £1 a week in Birmingham".(121)

John Benson defines many of the strategies employed by women to supplement their husband's income as "penny capitalism" which required the minimum equipment and capital - sewing and dressmaking, taking in washing, selling from front room shops, and providing personal services such as caring for lodgers and providing teas for tourists.(122)

Much research has been carried out on the power exercised by working class women in their homes and communities. Melanie Tebbutt observes that married women experienced a short period of

power in their middle years when they had working children contributing to the family income, though this "qualified dominance was dissipated again as they entered old age and sank once more into dependency, although the authority they exerted over their children was often maintained for a substantial period." (123) Robert Roberts draws attention to the Salford matriarchy of grandmothers who wielded great influence and represented an "ultra-conservative bloc in the community:

As long as a grandmother kept up her home to which children and grandchildren could regularly go for material help and counsel she reigned supreme. But as soon as illness or need forced her to give up house and live with son or daughter her influence in both clan and street generally diminished, though affection remained. (124)

Tebbutt agrees that such women exerted a "conservative and restraining influence upon community behaviour". (125) Peter Townsend in his study of old people commented on the matriarchal connection, "the special unity between grandmother, daughter, and daughter's child". (126) Standish Meacham contends that "evidence supports that wherever circumstances permitted mothers and daughters naturally sought each other's company and support" and that networks relied upon a matriarchy to sustain them. (127) Studies in many working class areas, even after the Second World War, confirm that same importance of the kin network with mother firmly at the centre. (128) Melanie Tebbutt, however, argues that this "matrifocal emphasis" in which the maternal grandmother dominated was gradually undermined by public-health professionals promoting the "ideology of motherhood" which infiltrated the

networks which had traditionally sustained communities and denigrated "traditional methods of childcare".(129)

While detailed studies have been made of men's social and leisure pursuits (for example the work of Erik Hobsbawm(130) which argues that the rise of a way of life centred upon the pub, association football, the music hall, and the annual seaside holiday was central to a distinctly working-class way of life which promoted solidarity and a class view of politics), little work has been done on women's leisure. There are frequent observations that they had none. Melanie Tebbutt's study of Salford points out that women experienced guilt at having any free time from household activities. They felt it was wrong to sit down to a book and devoted 'free' time to darning, knitting or repairing clothing.(131) She asserts that commercial leisure patterns during the early twentieth century were structured by both gender and poverty, the weighing of leisure opportunities in favour of men being immediately apparent, and disputes over male spending on beer and betting being the most common source of discord within marriage.

The pub was essentially a male domain. The appearance of a woman on a Friday night or Sunday dinnertime aroused resentment. However Andrew Davies cites oral research which reveals that in the face of an entrenched double standard, women's behaviour varied enormously. Some women were unlikely even to enter a pub,

others drank only when accompanied by their husbands, usually on a Saturday night, some drank only at home, while some visited pubs independently with women friends. He cites surveys conducted by Rowntree in York, and Mass-Observation in Bolton, as suggesting that between 16 and 36 per cent of the clientele of pubs in urban districts were likely to be women, whose presence was most marked in street-corner 'locals' in the poorer districts.(132) Standish Meacham also claims that "the place where working class men and women were most likely to enjoy each other's company was the pub, and notes that in the period 1890-1940, "it was generally agreed that drinking was on the increase among working-class women. He cites Booth as crediting the change to "a general emancipation which led them to understand that their appearance in a public house would not forever disgrace them," but adds "respectability kept as many from the pub as monotony or sociability drove there".(133)

Andrew Davies contests the notion of a standardised pattern of commercialised working-class culture advanced by Hobsbawm and claims this was based upon assumptions about levels of disposable incomes which were exaggerated when viewed from the perspective of the family economy and the 'poverty cycle' which entrapped parents of non-wage earning children. He argues that the communal life of streets and markets still provided a viable alternative to commercialised leisure, and that this was important where household resources were limited.(134) While during the 1920s

and 1930s women and young people increasingly patronised the cinema, for married women freedom of movement was restricted by domestic responsibilities and child care, and their resources for enjoying commercialised leisure activities often severely limited. Marjory Spring Rice commented on the number of married women in her survey who declared that they never went to the cinema.(135) The growth of the distribution of the wireless proved perhaps the most important leisure development for women with children. David Fowler points out the growing generation division of urban working-class culture, the cinema and dansehall being patronised predominantly by the 16-25 age-group.(136) He argues that the youth market for commercial leisure was well established by the 1930s, a generation before the emergence of the concept of the "teenager" and before this phenomenon was first identified by Mark Abrams in The Teenage Consumer.(137)

Andrew Davies notes in Manchester and Salford a more basic and cheap form of communal leisure available to women was "sitting out" in the street on a warm summer's evening.(138) This was also common in Hulme where in 1939 it was noted that "in summer family life overflows in to the street".(139) Standish Meacham interprets such communal meetings and attendant gossip as "the stuff from which community was woven", a neighbourliness implying reciprocity - "looking out for one another".(140) It was part of a security network. He contends that in the struggle to counter the harsh conditions of its daily life - sickness, unemployment,

poverty, and removal - the working class looked to neighbourhoods for their stability, what he terms a "sort of social symbiosis."

The street and the local shop were the centres of gossip which Melanie Tebbutt interprets both as a method of social control, monitoring standards of respectability, and as a significant factor in the sharing and support networks which underpinned working class life. She views gossip as "an important vehicle for the informal power which women of the urban poor often exerted over their neighbourhoods.(141) Robert Roberts testifies to this power, "Though a man might fear the law he feared too the disapproval of his neighbours and especially the condemnation of those who through articulateness, intelligence, economic and social standing acted as moral exemplars within the community".(142) Elizabeth Roberts claims that gossip often served to curb overt forms of domestic violence and underlines the importance of avoiding a bad name. During the interwar years Roberts reports that the more "respectable" respondents tended to withdraw from being too open with neighbours for fear of being objects of gossip.(143)

There is much evidence to suggest that neighbours and kin were the chief source of security in all working class neighbourhoods. Standish Meacham cites analysis of census material as proof that many lived close to family so that often kin were also neighbours.(144) Migration was often to areas where kin were

already established. Michael Anderson argues that there was a "calculative, even to our eyes callous, attitude to kin" on the part of many migrants. Through "connecting relatives", news was of jobs and practical assistance was passed along.(145) Charles Booth's survey reported that married children seldom assisted their parents with regular allowances, but they gave them gifts or helped with rent, and provided aged parents with a place in their own homes. He found women, being more useful in the house, were more frequently offered accommodation.(146) Standish Meacham contends that

the urban working-class village shared with the rural communities of the past a foundation of mutual responsibilities and obligations. Unlike those earlier communities, however, there was to be no resident governing class, imposing its own will - philanthropic, condescending, authoritarian - upon the rest.(147)

Richard Hoggart observed that the community in working class neighbourhoods drew strength

...chiefly from a knowledge, born of living close together, that one is inescapably part of a group, from the warmth and security that knowledge can give, from the lack of change in the group, and from the frequent need to turn to a neighbour since services cannot often be bought.(148)

Evidence of the terrible housing conditions experienced by the majority of the working class is found in all contemporary surveys. Seebohm Rowntree and A. C. Pigou estimated in 1914 that between 65 to 80 per cent of the working class lived in overcrowded accommodation which Rowntree described as "warehousing" rather than "housing".(149) Housing has been the subject of recent research with contradictory interpretations of

the 1930s as a time of both unemployment and recession and as a period when significant sections of the working class moved to the new council houses being built by the local authorities. In 1910, 90 per cent of the housing stock was private rented accommodation (with very little local authority provision) and 10 per cent owner-occupied; by 1938 local authority housing had risen to 10 per cent of the total, while 32 per cent was owner-occupied. According to Ann Hughes and Karen Hunt, this new public housing physically separated the working class elite from the poor and the unemployed. Rents were consistently higher than rents in the old areas. Thus most council tenants were families of skilled male labourers in regular employment, and the new council estates reflected the increasing differentiation within the working class. The occupiers of these new homes with the novelty of inlaid hot and cold water were segregated from the old family and neighbourhood ties. There was an increased emphasis on respectability and a decrease in kin networking. These new families could afford to follow the middle class proscription of married women working for wages. Lodgers were banned in municipal housing as was the running of any business from council homes.(150)

As this review points out there has thus been much recent research into the lives of urban working class women and their families, but less work has been done on their rural counterparts. The aim of this oral history investigation is to

obtain as accurate a picture as possible of the role of rural working class women in the period 1890 to 1940 and to compare the findings with the urban research. The areas on which the study has concentrated cover the whole life cycle encompassing childhood expectations and opportunities, including home life, schooling, work choices and employment before marriage; women's roles as mothers, housewives and managers, their workplace both within the home and outside, their contribution to the family economy and their strategies for security; leisure and social influences outside the family, including the church, politics, class and social status.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

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CHAPTER 2 - BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The study is centred on the village of Broadway, Worcestershire and surrounding villages within a ten mile radius in the Cotswolds and the Vale of Evesham. These include Badsey, Blockley, Bretforton, Bricklehampton, Buckland, Childswickham, Cropthorne, Laverton, Mickleton, Saintbury, Snowhill, Wickhamford and Willersey. (See map p. x.) The market town of Evesham was deliberately excluded as it did not fall within the scope of a village study, but attention was paid to its agricultural market and its pub life, as these catered to villagers from the surrounding areas. Fruit and vegetables were sent from Evesham on both the Great Western and the Midland Railway to London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as South Wales, which was known as "the salvation of Evesham".(1)

It was considered important to extend the study to include the smaller villages around Broadway because Broadway presented a variety of non-agricultural employment opportunities not typical of the surrounding area. The village was an important stopping place at the foot of Fish Hill on the main Worcester to London road. Therefore it catered for travellers as well as the local population. In additon to 28 public houses where horses - and drivers - could be refreshed, it boasted two hotels for the more affluent travellers. It was also unique in

having attracted a meritocratic as well as an aristocratic upper social stratum. By the turn of the century it had become a fashionable place to live and attracted such cultural luminaries as Frank Millet, Alfred Parsons, Henry James, Sir John Hare, Sir John Sargent, and Mary Anderson de Navarro.(2) W. & H. Smith's Household Almanac (1909) boasted, "It numbers amongst its residents personages distinguished in the artistic, literary and dramatic world".(3) Its social structure therefore was more varied and cosmopolitan than that of the smaller villages studied. "Well they had a better class of people living in Broadway, all the nobs lived in Broadway, didn't they?" said one Willersey respondent.(4) Broadway shopkeepers enjoyed a flourishing trade, and there was a thriving market for service functions such as gardening, grooming, dressmaking, laundry, and domestic labour. More important for its economic impact on the lives of village families, however, was the extension of the railway from Evesham to Broadway in 1904, giving a tremendous boost to market gardening and tourism, and the arrival of the Russell family in the same year. Sydney Russell refurbished the old Lygon Arms Hotel and his son Gordon developed a furniture workshop in the interwar years. When asked who were the most respected families one respondent replied without hesitation, the Russells, but then added the important proviso, "They weren't spoken of with all the greatest of respect but they employed the most people".(5)

The physical environment of these villages determined the type of agriculture practised. The Cotswold villages of Blockley, Buckland, Saintbury and Snowhill were predominantly pastoral whereas the other villages which either bordered on or were situated within the Vale of Evesham were devoted to market gardening, arable and mixed farming. Market gardening had made great advances in the Vale since 1852, when Evesham gained direct connection by rail with Worcester. This was extended to Oxford, London and the east and later to Birmingham, the north, Gloucester and Bristol. Market gardening was the only branch of agriculture as yet unchallenged by imports. Growers in the area around the Vale of Evesham benefited from the "Evesham Custom" introduced at the end of the nineteenth century by a group of market gardeners led by Joseph Masters, the first market gardener to be mayor of Evesham. This gave security of land tenure and enabled a tenant to turn over his holdings and improvements to a successor whom he nominated and who, if approved by the landlord, purchased the improvements such as fruit trees and other crops from the outgoing tenant. It had an obvious benefit for the tenant, for, as Benjamin Cox points out, "The value of the growing crops, cultivations, manures, and buildings on a change of tenancy often exceeded that of the freehold of the land".(6) It also benefited the whole development of market gardening in the region:

It protected the landlord from heavy claims for compensation; it created a demand for land; it enhanced

the capital value of purely agricultural estates by reason of the higher rents commanded and encouraged the development of the intensive cultivation in the district.(7)

Population in the pastoral villages was declining during the period while market gardening boosted population in the other villages. The Victoria History of Worcestershire notes that

Taking the Evesham Union area. one can almost pick out the market gardening from the agricultural parishes by the increase or decrease in population.(8)

A local guidebook published in 1930 writes that the expansion of market gardening was of relatively recent date.

Indeed. the old inhabitants have seen the transformation which has taken place. Farming has been entirely ousted in many parishes, and the whole of the land is given up to the growing of fruit and vegetables for the market. In no part of England can be seen such a wide area devoted to the intensive methods of cultivation as exists here today. As a result this is one of the very few districts entirely dependent upon the soil in which there has been of late years a steady growth of population.(9)

Market gardening employed many women as well as men. The 1921 Census notes that female agricultural workers

are comparatively numerous in Worcestershire. forming 42 per 1,000 occupied, and 120 in Rural Districts. This is largely due to the development of market gardening in the county... The proportion of agricultural workers is highest in Pershore and Evesham R.D.s. in each of which 265 per 1,000 occupied are so employed.(10)

A detailed account of the agricultural changes in the area - the growth of market gardening and the agricultural wage scales - is given in Chapter 6.

Population of Villages 1891-1931

	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1931</u>
Broadway	1,536	1,414	1,793	1,860	2,138
Buckland & Laverton	259	283	261	266	240
Badsey	574	775	1,127	1,125	1,165
Blockley	2,127	1,812	1,845	1,727	1,741
Bretforton	529	655	688	755	766
Childswickham	400	396	492	484	449
Mickleton	600	660	604	577	682
Saintbury	122	117	125	94	108
Snowhill	240	*	190	179	168
Wickhamford	137	171	259	305	338
Willersey	353	393	452	452	485

*Snowhill is included with village of Stanton in 1901 return

Source: Census of Population 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931

The following figures from the Census Reports of 1921 and 1931 show that for men market gardening and agriculture remained the main source of employment. For women domestic service was the largest source of employment, even more women being employed in this area in 1931 than 1921. Glove making, according to the census, declined during the ten year period to a point where it was no longer recorded as an occupation in Evesham Rural District in 1931, although according to oral testimony it was still carried on.

Employment - Evesham Rural District.
Source: Census of Population 1921,
County of Worcester, Table 17

Farmers	128 male,	11 female
Gardeners	1,030 male,	82 female
Agricultural Labourers	469 male,	56 female
Gardeners' Labourers.....	585 male,	127 female
Glove Makers		34 female
Domestic Servants		349 female

Employment - Evesham Rural District,
Source: Census of Population 1931,
County of Worcester, Table 17

Agricultural occupations...	2,795 male,	133 female
Farmers.....	180 male,	(unrecorded)
Gardeners and their labourers	1,196 male	(unrecorded)
Agricultural labourers.....	1,259 male	(unrecorded)
Glove Makers		(unrecorded)
Domestic Servants		624

Most of the 35 men and women who were interviewed were from families directly employed on the land either in market gardening or farming, but local tradesmen's families were also represented as they formed an integral part of the community. Transport was limited and small village shops supplied the local market with its daily necessities. Broadway, for example, contained five grocers', three bakers', and two butchers' shops.(11) Blockley also had a good selection of shops. Choice was more limited in the other villages, but even the smallest had its village shop.

The respondents were chosen from the response to an appeal for volunteers directed to the secretaries of the Women's

Institutes in the sample villages. but in order to broaden the range of those interviewed and to include men as well as women, the initial respondents were asked to recommend other inhabitants who were born locally or who moved into the district within the period of the study. A biography of the 35 respondents is included as an appendix to the thesis.

Three former school teachers were included in the sample in order to add their recollections of the village school, its curriculum and its pupils, and to discover how girls' and boys' education and employment opportunities were affected not only by family poverty but also by contemporary definitions of gender roles. With the exception of the school teachers, the respondents themselves defined their background as working class, although some shopkeeping and market gardening families owned their own business and employed others. Mrs. AR's father, for example, was an enterprising man who in addition to building up a market garden bought his own house in which his wife ran a post office. He became a school manager, but his daughter insisted, "We were just a working class family. A real working class family." (12) Mrs. AB's family was also on the borders of the middle class. Her father was a tenant farmer in Blockley who also ran a carriage and later car hire firm, and was ticket agent for the railway. Mrs. AB's mother ran a boot and shoe shop. But the family had to struggle, "one business had to pay for the loss of the other one". (13)

Elizabeth Roberts wrote that "the respondents who are most difficult to assign to a class or division of the working class are the shopkeepers." (14) A Marxist definition would assign them to the *petite bourgeoisie*, but their capital often consisted solely of their stock-in-trade. Contemporary society viewed "tradesmen" as working class; neighbouring Cheltenham Ladies' College, for example, specifically excluded the entry of "tradesmen's" daughters during the period studied.

The biggest difficulty in the definition of such "tradesmen" was presented by the bakers. Two bakers' daughters were included in the sample because, in researching the problem of family debt, their testimony was very important. Bread in the period studied remained the staple item of food (6-7 lbs per head per week was the national average consumed in 1900). (15) It was an item which most households had to buy and was often the most costly item in the weekly food budget. It was found that compared with other respondents the bakers were relatively affluent. As noted in Chapter 7, their families enjoyed a more varied life-style than other villagers. It can be debated whether the bakers' families belonged to working class or the *petite bourgeoisie*. If they should be assigned to the latter class, the question is raised at what point did they enter it? As an apprentice and journeyman there is no doubt that a baker could be defined as working class. Does the renting or eventual purchase of a shop alter his status? If

the employment of the labour power of others is the benchmark. what if this labour power is provided by his family, and it is his wife who works behind the counter, his son who assists in the bakehouse, and his daughter who is the bookkeeper and delivery girl?

Such queries over the definition of class reflect the differences in theoretical approach to social differentiation and stratification between Marxist and post-marxist analyses. The post-marxist functionalist approach assigns occupational roles to a social rank within a social hierarchy rather than assigning them to distinctive and mutually opposed classes based on the possession or lack of capital. Such a definition would seem more relevant to a rural study than the less flexible Marxist definition of class. As used by the post-marxists, the term "working class" thus embraces a considerable range of manual workers' employment, skills and life-style. The *embourgeoisement* of the working class, first noted in the United States in the 1950s, can in fact already be seen amongst some of the families in this study. The gradual purchase of land by market gardeners elevated many former labourers to the ranks of the self-employed who were no longer totally dependent upon wages of an employer. Conversely such self-employment in the Depression sometimes resulted in even greater poverty than that experienced by the landless labourer. In addition it was found that many wives ran enterprises in their homes which

could be included in John Benson's definition of penny capitalism.(16) It was found that the definition of class in the countryside was problematic and that workers did not always fit into neat theoretical categories.

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CHAPTER 3 - "PUTTING THE CHILD IN ITS PLACE"
(a) THE HOME

The first part of this study is devoted to the influence of the home, church, school, and class on the formation of the child. In this chapter oral evidence is examined in order to ascertain how girls were conditioned for their future roles by their upbringing within their families.

It was found that like all girls in this period, rural girls were conditioned from childhood by the prevailing ideology that women's sphere was in the domestic domain, though for rural working class women this by no means precluded hard manual labour in addition to looking after their families. Girls' expectations of life were shaped by the example provided by their mothers, by the domestic role they were allocated within the family, and by the church and the education system. Legal, political, social and religious policy dictated a segregated life-style both in social class and gender roles. Middle-class norms anticipated that families should be headed, economically supported, and represented by the husband and father and that women's duties should be confined to the management of their home and their children. Working class women and their children, however, were often forced by economic necessity to participate in the work force, and society, while overtly disapproving, tacitly accepted their

position of supplementary earners. Indeed, the middle class life-style could not have been maintained without the labour of working-class women, both single and married, in their homes.

The families of the rural labourers remained amongst the largest in all population groups. Mr. Hodge from Snowhill observed that "Whereas years ago the village was overrun with children, nowadays there are very few young people".(1) Similar comments were made by respondents in all the villages. Respondents came from families of up to 13 children in the period up to the First World War. Afterwards it is interesting to note that it was only those born into farm labourers' families who belonged to families of more than eight children. By the 1930s four children was the maximum number in all the families interviewed, regardless of occupation (see chapter 5a).

Because families were usually large, parents felt that strict discipline was necessary in order to maintain control. Both boys and girls were conditioned at an early age not to question authority. According to respondents, parents maintained implicit faith in the maxim "spare the rod, spoil the child", though from the interview material it would appear that from the 1920s onward the disciplinary smack increasingly began to replace the harsher punishments administered with a belt or riding crop that were common practice before and during

the First World War. It is probably not purely coincidental that this reduction in the severity of justice coincides with the reduction in average family size. Most respondents remembered their parents as firm but fair disciplinarians, who tolerated no arguments or answering back, and this attitude continued even after the children had left school and were out working. Harold Andrews was 13 and working full time in the family market garden, but "got a sore behind" for smoking a clay pipe he found in a consignment of soot which he was spreading on the land.(2) Looking back from this safe distance in time, no resentment was harboured by those interviewed unless they had been punished for an offence they had not committed, indeed most felt strict discipline had been good for them. The frequent comment was, "it done me the world of good". Usually one parent was the disciplinarian, and corporal punishment could be administered by mothers as well as fathers.

She had my dad's riding whip. Kept on the rack. And she'd only have to look at that. My dad never touched us. She did all the disciplining. And it was discipline too. Oh we got it, yes. It was the only way then. With big families you had to. It didn't hurt us, bit of disciplining.(3)

Dad couldn't touch any of us. He just couldn't bear children to be hit - yes, the boys used to get into mischief and they had to be, but it was mum did it. Mother did all the punishments, dad wouldn't touch them. I only remember having two hidings, and I deserved them I think.(4)

Mum did the disciplining. Every day, every hour we were told what to do and what not to do. My father never hit me. I think Henry had the belt a couple of times, but Henry could be a rascal. My dad was never allowed to say anything. He was very much under the thumb.(5)

Mum ruled in the house, but my dad was the disciplinarian. I was frightened to death of him. He'd have the belt. If we did anything at school and had the cane and come home and told our dad, he'd give it us as well ...we were never spoiled. Never in the wide world.(6)

In The Edwardians, Paul Thompson argues that most parents did not have to inflict excessive corporal punishment as their authority was so rarely challenged.(7) Often the mere threat of corporal punishment was enough.

I can remember when we lived in the first cottage we lived in, it was an old beamed cottage, and there was a beam right across the ceiling with some nails in and there was a cane used to hang up, and he only had to lift his eyes to the cane, you know, and that was it. He never got it down. I used to sort of look at that. We used to get smacked.(8)

Well we knew how far we could go, but I mean they didn't muck us about or anything. My eldest brother had either been rude or done something he shouldn't have done and my father walloped him and it turned out he didn't do it, and he said, "That's the last time I shall ever do that". No, they'd threaten. I can remember running down the street after I'd done something I shouldn't do. We used to go down the street and along a path and then out to the fields at the back. And you could see the back of our house from this path. And I can remember my mother shouting, "You wait until you come home". And I used to creep through the back door when I did come home, but nothing ever happened. No I can never remember really ever really having a really good hiding. But even so we knew how far we could go and we were all sort of respectable. And I think it also kept us all on the straight and narrow when we grew up.(9)

Well you were taught to tell the difference between yes and no. You'd be threatened. I didn't have a lot of belting myself, but when the law was laid down you obeyed it.(10)

Answering back was severely punished because it was a direct challenge to authority. One respondent could only

remember being spanked once by his father. This significantly was for answering back.

That was because I said, "I shan't", and he said, "What did you say?" "I shan't." And I had to go out through the door. And he shut the door and gave me a good spanking. That was the only time he did actually, but I knew he done it. I never beared no malice or nothing, but it done me the world of good.(11)

However, other and more potentially traumatic methods were sometimes resorted to by his mother.

There was a hole under the stairs where we used to store the potatoes. That was where you was put when you didn't behave yourself. "Put you in the dark hole", Mum used to say and that did us more good than anything.(12)

Grandmothers, aunts and neighbours had important roles. Those respondents who felt their parents' discipline was too harsh or felt a lack of affection at home, could often find some comfort in the home of a nearby relative.

Mother didn't show much affection to me, a bit more to the other sisters. My little sister-in-law couldn't do nothing wrong..My favourite was me aunty that lived next door...If our parents were annoyed we'd go and see aunty. I suppose it was nice for our parents too - they were glad to get rid of us.(13)

One respondent had four great-aunts who shared two semi-detached cottages next door to each other.

It was nice. They were substitute grandmothers. I can remember being cold and hungry and it was a haven of warmth and food and laughter and that sort of thing. Because there was an awful lot of quarrelling going on between my mother and dad.(14)

Such family networks supplied economic as well as emotional support. They provided a safety net for the old as well as the

young family members. The importance of such kin networks is examined in chapter 8b.

Cottages were small, families usually large (see chapter 5c for descriptions of housing). How did mothers cope with large families in small cottages when they were often occupied with homework such as gloving and sewing as well as housework? It was found that children were encouraged to play out of doors as much as possible. Cottage orchards and gardens were usually large in order that the family could grow its own fruit and vegetables and fatten a pig. Respondents stressed how safe it was to play in the village lanes and fields in this period. Agriculture remained labour intensive so that there were kin or neighbours about in the fields.

We enjoyed life. In the summer it was lovely because living in a place like Saintbury with a farm just at the top of our garden - there was a cherry tree between our house and the farm - and we used to ride on the haycarts when they made the hay in the summer...Mind you there were no vehicles in those days hardly. You know it was an occasion if something came up the hill. It was safe to go anywhere and do anything. And mother didn't have to worry at all, the only thing she worried about was that the older kids would get us jumping the streams and we'd slip in them, you know, and things like that, but we didn't get hurt we only wet ourselves.(15)

My joy was nature. Coming down the lanes this time of the year. Finding celandines and the fresh hemlock sprouting and the daisies. I was so exhilarated.(16)

There was a sense of freedom which modern children do not enjoy.

Course in those days you could wander about the fields and do what you liked. Now they can't do it and I think that's got a lot to do with it. I mean we didn't have the toys

and things that they do, we didn't have material things, but we got to do things.(17)

We all used to go up the lane to the mill. All the kiddies. Some of the boys rode on the sacks, right up to the top... We played tops and marbles and everything like that. We didn't have many toys, they have everything now; but we could play in the lanes. I can't get out of the idea of walking in the middle of the street, 'cause we always did. We were allowed to play by the brook; it wasn't deep - only when it flooded - but we were never taught to swim.(18)

In Broadway the only danger was the high street - the main road from Worcester to Oxford and London - which could be fairly busy with carts, traps, and increasingly in the last two decades with motor vehicles.

Well you had to keep out of mischief and keep out of the road, that's all. You had your meals and all that at meal-time, but keep out of the road! Out the back you see there was a big orchard, we'd play in there and anywhere.(19)

In a close-knit community, however, it was difficult to step out of bounds. Everybody knew everybody in the village and all kept an eye on the children, often meting out instant discipline.

You knew everybody and everybody knew you. If you did anything they'd tell your father and then you'd have the belt. In that respect we were brought up hard. But it didn't do us any harm.(20)

Pranks were duly reported and punished. Not only would neighbours inform parents of any misbehaviour, but, "If they could catch you they'd put a stick round you too, you know".(21)

It was the boys rather than the girls who got into mischief.

If we were somewhere we shouldn't have been, you know and we thought the policeman had seen us .. Someone would tell me dad or something, because the policeman knew you then. "I'll tell yer dad, I'll tell so and so". Because they knew who you were you see. We used to get up to all sorts of tricks, even in those days. Nothing malicious though, not like they do today. (Why were you better?) Well, we didn't have the money for one thing. We'd club together and buy a packet of Woodbine cigarettes. (And if your parents found out?) We wouldn't half catch it. A sore behind! We used to do it more for devilment than anything else I think. We'd go out the fields.(22)

Mind you it was all bits of devilment. There'd be little gangs going this way from school, little gangs that way from school. And I can remember - who the party was I don't know, it wasn't ours - it were through some allotment gardens. The "asparagrass" buds had been knocked off. To see how straight you could throw, you know. And then where we lived at Fox House, if you go up the village a bit more there's another lane which runs into an open field. And he used to keep a couple of ponies. And he had a grandson that used to come there and drive the little pony and trap and used to fetch the people from the station when it was down the Evesham Road here, people coming into Broadway. We used to catch 'em and ride 'em bareback. And of course he would report it to the schoolmaster, and you'd be called to the desk, "Hold out your hand. You know what that's for, don't you!" And of course you did.(23)

Children, however, had little time on their hands to get into mischief. "Adolescence" was a term as yet unheard of. Childhood ended with school days at 13 or 14, but before that there was plenty of work to be done to earn a little cash and contribute to the economic support of the family. The boys worked on the land or as errand boys, the girls did shop, or domestic work.

My eldest brothers learned to milk when was one was about eight and the other was seven. And they had to milk three cows each before they went to school in the morning.(24)

Harold Andrews wrote,

On Saturdays in spring my job was to tread the rows of corn. Having been forked the previous autumn the land was usually quite hollow after the winter frosts, which were often more severe then than now. Treading firmed the plants in the soil and greatly helped their growth. No sole marks had to be left and heel marks had to touch each other, the weight being greater on the heels.(25)

In the 1920s boys earned 2d and 3d an hour picking up potatoes and bird-scaring.(26) There were many such part-time jobs.

You had to go thistle-plucking and go and get the wood for burning and things like that. All the people on the estate used to have three fields a year - you never saw hardly a thistle in the fields in them days. We used to go over them three times a year in the fields, with a scythe or sickle. And rabbits, any amount of rabbits we used to catch. Halfpenny a skin. (What about moleskins?) Yes, I'd do that. I've had a shilling apiece for moleskins. (Did you do any bird-scaring?) Aye, we used to scare the rooks off and the crows. (And did the farmers pay you?) Oh yes, we used to get thruppence or sixpence. (Did you ever do any work removing stones from the fields?) Aye, we used to go stone-picking. As soon as we'd get home from school. "Go and get them buckets and pick them stones up." And they used to give us a shilling a load - a cart-load. And a shilling a cart-load for breaking them, and we used to go over and break them. They had them on the drive. It was all white stone on the drive, they never had anything but white stone on the drives.(27)

Bob Hodges also had a number of different jobs. He could well have been included amongst the children cited in John Benson's Penny Capitalists. He went thistle cutting, digging up docks and helping in the large gardens of the local gentry. He picked and sold wild daffodils from Stanton, he could shoot and snare a rabbit before he left school and often had to go around his father's snares before going to school.

We were always short of money, and would do anything to earn a few pence. We tried a number of schemes.. I think

the one that paid the best was snaring rabbits and also selling the skins. We would sell the odd rabbit or two and collect as many skins as we could as each month a rag and bone man came round the village shouting, "Rags, bones and rabbits' skins". We sometimes had quite a collection of skins for which we got about one penny each.

Another thing we tried was mole catching. Three of us boys had about five traps between us. We would set the traps at weekends, and go round them before we went to school, sometimes in the dark as it was a winter's job. We would catch about 2 dozen moles during the winter months. They were skinned and the skins tacked out on a board until they were dry, then packed and posted to a firm in London..

All the roads around Snowhill had gates across the roads which separated each field, as all the farm animals grazed all over the roads those days. So anyone in a car or pony and trap had to keep getting out to open and shut them. So one of the things we did in our holiday was to close the gate if it was propped open, then keep out of sight until we saw a car coming, then just before the car got to the gate one of us would run to open it. We sometimes got as much as sixpence for that. I suppose the few people that owned cars at that time were quite wealthy, but sometimes the same car came back the other way, and we were told off, as they knew there was no stock in the fields.(29)

Many Broadway boys worked as delivery boys.

Saturdays I used to do a few errands, odd jobs. Carry the meat around on an old bicycle with a carrier on the front. The one butcher used to feed me. He'd give me Saturday dinner and sometimes some tea and that you know.(30)

Maurice Andrews was born in the 1920s, the ninth child of a family of 11. He wrote:

When I say that everyone in the family who could walk had to work, this was literally true. At first we worked on the allotment or at home, then we moved on to a job outside the family. Father always kept pigs and cultivated some land and day after day before school the old milk-churn on wheels, filled with pig-swill collected from the neighbours, had to be pushed to the pig-sties near the railway and the girls, Nancy, Hilda, Bessie and Julia, as well as the boys, had to take a turn. There were many other jobs to be done. Digging, raking, fruit picking, onion tying. At home, too, mother needed help with the

laundry, folding sheets, ironing and delivering to whoever was benefiting from the service.(31)

Long before reaching the age of 14 years, the usual school leaving age, most village boys had to take an evening and Saturday job. Butcher's boys, grocery delivery boys and newspaper rounds were jobs which were always attractive. Anything to get away from digging and hoeing. In addition to cleaning the doctor's knives I became a Saturday butcher's boy and pushed Bertie Collins' tradesman's bike around the village, laden with sausages, ham and joints of all sorts. These jaunts brought the errand boy into the smallest cottages and into the big kitchens of the more stately houses where the cook usually offered a cup of tea and cake. To be a van-boy was of course the ambition of all the lads. Private cars were not too numerous then and to be able to ride around on a Saturday was great fun... My pay for the day was two shillings and sixpence and a pork-pie if there were any left - there usually was...As a family we took on the evening newspaper rounds, too.(32)

While boys were doing errands and working out in the fields, girls were usually employed in domestic work.

When I was seven or eight years old I used to go to the shop, the bakehouse, they used to sell groceries and paraffin. And I used to go and scrub the shop floor. I was paid 2d a week for that.(33)

I had one little job on a Saturday morning, this was when I was going to school. I come along to the Manor here and done a little bit of tidying up and I had thruppence, a cup of cocoa and a piece of cake. Well, I was in the house mostly tidying up.(34)

Most girls had to help their mothers with the housework, cleaning, washing, ironing, laying the table, cooking, washing up, blacking the range, mending and minding younger siblings. One respondent, the only girl in the family, mended all her brothers' woollen socks, about seven pairs a week, from the time she was eleven, for which she received a penny a pair.

I was expected to wait on my brothers. In small ways, you know. I was sent fetching and carrying for them. All sorts of excuses made. I used to ask why must I do it? Mother would say, "Well because their boots are dirty.

They can't go upstairs and fetch things and you must do it." Yes, boys were never expected to do anything in the house. The girls were supposed to do that. We took it as a matter of course.(35)

As Lynn Jamieson has pointed out,

In making greater demands on their daughters, mothers were thus not only drawing on their traditional parental authority, but also respecting the conventional notions about gender divisions.(36)

Many girls helped their mothers cut up the meat when the pig was killed. If their parents had a shop the girls usually helped out when not at school. In addition they and their brothers often helped in the fields at harvest time. The teacher at Bricklehampton school reported that "they had pea-picking holidays when the season for peas came around" so that the whole family, girls, boys and mother, could earn money picking. The babies went along in their prams.(37)

Where mothers did gloving (see chapter 6c), their young daughters often helped.

I've gone to bed at two o'clock in the morning and I've had to get up at six o'clock to finish the gloving before I went to school...In my time, after helping with the meal and all, I used to have to do the thumbs, quirks and the fourchettes. I left school at thirteen but they kept me away sometimes to help...We used to come home from school and go pea-picking, and picking up potatoes. (Earnings) We had to hand it in. We had to make our money, and it wasn't yours when you'd worked for it.(38)

Most families had animals and pets of some sort and these taught the children much about life, birth and death. Usually the animals too had their economic function within the family.

Bob Hodge lists dogs, cats, chickens, *bantam hens*, rabbits, squirrels, ferrets, and the obligatory family pig.

Nearly every family had a dog or two. We always had dogs and like a lot more families we used them for rabbiting and rat catching. There was a plague of rats and mice - what with all the corn ricks around the village; they were proper breeding grounds for them. When they threshed a rick of corn, as many as 100 rats were killed and hundreds of mice. They usually stayed in the rick until the last layer or two of sheaves were lifted, then they would start running all ways. That's where the dogs came in handy. Not many got away as the farmers usually ran some wire netting around the rick so we had a better chance of killing them.

There were dozens of cats in Snowhill and it seemed the more cats there were the more mice. I think it's because they were always bringing them home and quite a few got away and found their way into the houses.

A lot of the kids had tame rabbits, but most of them ended up on the dinner table. You go to feed them one night and find one or two missing, and they would be on the table the next day.(39)

Boys and their fathers worked on the land, often up to their ankles in mud during the winter; families had pigsties, outdoor privies and henhouses which had to be cleaned out; children played in the lanes, and cut across ploughed fields on their way to school. How did women cope with their families' personal hygiene when families were large, water had to be fetched by the pail and the supply of hot water was limited to what could be heated on the range? The old maxim, "cleanliness is next to Godliness", seems to have been followed as punctiliously as possible. A village school-teacher who started teaching in 1917 reported that

Really under the facilities they had they were really very good, because when they came to school they were all taught to be clean. We had a look at them to see. They didn't

come to school dirty. They were poor, clothes perhaps mended, or perhaps torn a bit, but they were clean.(40)

The schools encouraged a practical approach to keeping up appearances. The head teacher in Willersey told his pupils, "No matter how old and patched your clothes, keep your boots clean and you will always have a tidy appearance".(41)

Much emphasis was placed on washing the parts of the body which showed, faces and hands and necks, regularly; the rest was washed once a week on bath night. Sexual segregation on bath nights was strict.

We had a tin bath in the kitchen. My sister-in-law and me had it Saturday night. I don't know how the older ones got on. They'd never undress in front of us.(42)

Bath night was always on a Saturday night. In a tin bath in front of the fire. And with sometimes about six children being bathed, the last one in was unlucky as we all used the same water which was topped up occasionally with a kettle of boiling water. As we got older we either had a bath in the small pantry if there was room, or in the brewhouse, with a sheet hung over the window.(43)

The village of Stanton boasted a small outdoor swimming pool fed by a spring from the hill. To use it involved a long walk over the hill for village children from Snowhill, but it solved the bath problem in the summer months,

A lot of us learned to swim there, but I think the main reason we went was to have a good wash. It saved getting out the tin bath. I know one lad whose mother always made him take a bar of Sunlight soap with him. He would sit on the edge and lather himself all over, then lower himself in the water and swill it all off. That was his swimming lesson for the day. I'm sure his mother thought that's what the baths were for. (44)

The pool at Stanton had changing huts, the lake in Northwick Park did not. It was, therefore, strictly segregated, social prudery effectively barring the girls from learning to swim.

Well there was a pool - don't know about a swimming pool. It was only boys. Well it was an open pool, a lake. There were no facilities. (So did you learn to swim?) No there wasn't any chance in those days.(45)

Children's souls, as well as bodies, had to undergo a weekly purification. With bodies cleansed by the Saturday night bathing ritual, arrayed in the clean underclothes (which had to last the rest of the week) and in their Sunday best, or if they did not own such a luxury, clean clothes and boots, they were sent off to church and Sunday school to be instilled with morality, if not always piety. (See chapter 3b.)

Oral evidence thus presents a picture of a strict, very disciplined upbringing. Children were expected to do as they were told and not to question authority. From an early age they were expected to help their families, but the nature of this help was determined by gender. Girls were given domestic chores, helping their mothers within the home and looking after siblings and perhaps earning pocket doing cleaning jobs for others; while boys worked outside as errand boys or doing odd jobs on the land. From an early age children of both sexes contributed to their keep.

CHAPTER 3 - "PUTTING THE CHILD IN ITS PLACE"
(b) THE CHURCH

Outside the home one of the chief influences to be felt by children from an early age was that of the church. In this chapter oral evidence is examined in order to ascertain whether the church remained a powerful factor in the socialisation of women and their families in the period 1890 to 1940. The labourers' union organiser Joseph Arch accused the Church of England in the 19th century of exerting its influence to keep villagers firmly in their social places. (See footnote 1.) He pointed out how village women were forced to acknowledge their subservient position by the vicar's wife. (See footnote 2.) Were there still overtones of putting the working class in their place and reinforcing class and gender roles, or was it a purely positive influence giving women and their families moral guidance and support?

While a religious census by the Daily News in 1902-1903 in metropolitan London demonstrated that a majority of working men and women did not attend church or chapel (830,000 worshippers, compared with 1.4 million non-attenders), in the countryside around Broadway oral evidence points out that Sunday centred on the church for all classes. It was mentioned that it was only after the Second World War that the secularisation of Sunday began to take place. It was found that outside the family, the church remained the dominant influence in women's lives in this

period, reinforcing the family's social norms, its station in society, patriotism, and moral values. The church provided the cohesive force which tied all segments of the village together in their allotted spheres. The social pyramid of the village hierarchy and the rigid division of gender roles was upheld by the teachings of the Church of England. Where there was still a squire, he and his family sat in the best pew, the gentry and prosperous farmers were seated in the front of the church, and the poor were relegated to the side or back. In villages such as Buckland and Stanton the church was adjacent to the manor house and the squire had his own private entrance to the churchyard. Status was maintained even in death, the landowning elite being buried in the best positions in the church or the churchyard. It was taught that God had ordained rich and poor, male and female, and that no one should question his or her estate or gender role. "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made the high and lowly and ordered their estate", was still included in the hymn, All Things Bright and Beautiful. The Church Catechism taught the poor to order themselves lowly and reverently towards their betters. The vicar, or more often his wife or curate, visited the poor, but the incumbent still dined with the gentry, and almost invariably belonged to this class. Many vicars were wealthy, enjoying private incomes, and some, like the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Fladbury, still farmed the Glebe Farm.

However, the pressure exerted to imbue the villagers with the habits of diligence, social deference and docility was no longer as overt as in Joseph Arch's youth in the first half of the 19th century when J. B. Sumner (later Bishop of Chester) wrote for the Labourers' Friend Society that it was necessary

to interweave with all the information acquired by children the most valuable of all information (next to religion) a sense of their situation in life, and its practical duties of subordination and industry.(3)

The "right direction" towards this goal was to be applied "by the superintendence and occasional intercourse of the superior ranks." The "growing generation" are reminded

that the object of the care bestowed upon them is not to raise them above their allotted condition, but to fit them for performing more adequately their duties both to God and man.(4)

Joseph Arch noted at the beginning of this century that the church was changing.

Perhaps the difference between the rich and the poor may not be driven home in so marked a manner in country churches as it was in the thirties; but if it is not, it is because they are afraid of us now, and dare not show up in their true colours. The dragon of caste is only scotched, not killed.(5)

As Arch predicted, research shows that the "dragon of caste" took a long time to die. Maurice Andrews grew up in the 1920s. He complained that

The parsons of Broadway have not always been very good shepherds of their flock as to some extent the working man has been neglected. Each succeeding vicar seems to have taken the view that in Broadway one in his position should look after the higher social levels, then all would be well with his ministry.(6)

All respondents reported that they were brought up in a strong religious faith. The majority were members of the Church of England, though a number went to the more democratic chapel. Villagers could often communicate better with fellow lay-preachers than the socially superior vicar and many respondents had vivid memories of dedicated preachers. By the twentieth century these *chapels were tolerated by the Church of England* but as noted in footnote 1, they had often encountered stiff opposition on the part of the vicar and his supporters when they were established, and they were only to be found in open villages such as Broadway, Badsey, Blockley, Bretforton, Childswickham, Mickleton and Willersey.

Harold Andrews, born 1898, wrote about the chapel prayer meetings in Willersey, at which "Old James", James Hartwell, preached:

Those prayer meetings live in my memory ... The old gentleman must have tramped thousands of miles round the Evesham Circuit taking services in the country chapels. He was a carter which meant walking all day and every day with a team of horses, ploughing, cultivating and general farm work for which he received about twelve shillings a week. On Sundays he walked from Willersey to Wyre, Evesham, Bidford, Welford-on-Avon, Pebworth, Honeybourne, Long Marston, Mickleton, Chipping Campden, Ilmington, Weston Sub-Edge or Broadway.(7)

The chapels preached the doctrine of self-improvement. One of their goals was to eliminate the problems of drunkenness and promote a teetotal agricultural workforce. Respondents

mentioned attending temperance meetings, and young men signed the pledge (see chapter 7a).

Some families, nick-named "devil-dodgers", attended both church and chapel. Sometimes one parent would be "church" and the other "chapel".

On Sundays we went to church, Sunday school and church. We had Sunday best and work-a-day clothes. My dad was very strict. You weren't allowed to read the Sunday paper and you weren't allowed to sew. If you got a hole in your stocking you weren't allowed to mend it. Father used to go to church because he was church warden. Mother was chapel. I heard my grandmother say that her husband, my grandfather, he used to go to church and chapel.(8)

Just as some respondents reported that there was pressure to conform to the employer's politics when voting, there was also pressure to conform to his religion when worshipping. In Blockley, where the silk mills had once dominated employment, one respondent was bought up in the Church of England.

But my father had been Baptist. His family were Baptist. And as we lived opposite the chapel we used to go to both. We always went to all the events like harvest festivals and things at the chapel... In Blockley the chapel was very strong years ago. Not in my day so much, but most of the mill owners were chapel, Baptists, so of course that gave, well if you worked for somebody you had to go to their church.(9)

Only one respondent came from a Catholic family. She lived in Broadway, the only village which was cosmopolitan enough to have a Catholic Church. It was attached to a monastery. She recalled that in the 1920s, when she was growing up, there was still a certain animosity towards Catholics.

We went to a Catholic school which was near here and the church, but yes there was a certain feeling in the village,

"them there Catholics" that sort of feeling. Gone now really. People go to one another's churches. (10)

With the exception of one mother who was a busy dressmaker, and a family who ran a tea-shop which was open on Sunday, all parents were reported as church or chapel goers. A few fathers were infrequent attenders - one father, for example, was "out grooming on many a Sunday" - but mothers, unless they had to stay at home with young children, were reported as "regulars". The two respondents whose mothers were too busy to attend church were anxious to confirm that they were, nevertheless, religious. The dress-maker believed that "your church was in your own home".(11) The mother who ran the tea-shop had "bible society things in frames"(12), but the temptation of Mammon was too powerful, "Sunday was our best day. We took more money on a Sunday than we did all the week."(13)

With the exception of these two families, all respondents had vivid memories of Sunday in their childhood being a very special day. Most families went to one service on a Sunday, many went both morning and evening. Children were sent to Sunday school.

Mothers of small children were excluded from attendance as only children of an age to behave themselves were welcome, and they went off to Sunday school when the sermon began.

(Mrs. AF) My father used to take us. We used to go to church every Sunday with him when we were old enough to go. But my mother, she knew her Bible, although she didn't have

as much opportunity to go to church, because there were the babies to look after, but she was very sincere. (Miss BE) But Sunday was Sunday. (Mrs. AF) You didn't even, if a button came off you wouldn't sew it on. (Miss BE) You didn't do any washing or mending. It was the wars that altered all that. (Mrs. AF) And you wore your best clothes on Sunday. (Miss BE) And brushed them up on a Monday morning and put them away till the next week. (Mrs. AF) You had Sunday best, Sunday shoes and things. (Miss BE) And you were taught to go to Sunday school and church. Twice a day. (Mrs. AF) We used to go to Sunday school in the morning, the church was bang opposite the school, and then we used to go to church first, and then when the sermon started they didn't want the children to stay in for the sermon, they used to go across to the school and finish off at Sunday school. (14)

It was a social as well as a religious ritual. Women took pride in decking themselves and their families out in their Sunday best.

A lot of people I knew went to church, and I never knew if they went for the real purpose of worship, or whether they went because they had a new hat or new coat, or whatever. And I can remember seeing my mother - see we all had best clothes - and she used to go out so prim and she always used to see that everything was all right at the back, her hat, and I remember she got into a tizzy one morning. She couldn't find her gloves. "If I can't find my gloves, I can't go to church, and if I can't go to church my day won't go right." (15)

Religion was practised at home as well as in church. Prayers were said before bed by adults and children alike, some families sang hymns at family get-togethers on Sundays, sometimes accompanied by the melodeon or piano. Their unquestioning faith gave women the strength to face their often daunting lives. One respondent described her mother, who had raised her own eleven children plus two kin, as "an extraordinary woman, a good-living woman":

She had a thyroid operation, it affected her voice-box, goitre. My sister said to her, "I don't know how you

managed to come through all this, and her answer was, "It was the same Lord helped me through this as helped me through all my life's problems".(16)

It was an important part of a mother's role to live up to Christian precepts and pass them on to her children. From an early age children were taught society's moral codes by home, church and chapel. In the home as well as in the family's place of worship the language of religion was used to this end. Homilies such as "the devil makes work for idle hands" and "cleanliness is next to godliness" instilled the virtues of the work ethic. The ten commandments were the basis for a moral upbringing. Christianity and respectability went hand-in-hand throughout the period right up to the Second World War.

My eldest brother was a bit of a tear-away and got into slight scrapes like with the police for having a noisy motorbike or riding his motorbike when it wasn't licensed or something. Silly little things when you think about it, but which to my mother was something terrible. But no, I can honestly say, we all grew up and we none of us got into trouble. But I think it was out of respect you know and the fact that we knew that they wouldn't like it, sort of thing. My mother was always a church-goer. She didn't sort of ram religion down your throat. She always went to church herself, my father went on the very odd occasion, not very often. But my mother, she didn't miss many churches. And I think she sort of tried to live - well, she liked a bit of scandal like the rest, and she talked scandal - but she tried to live up to it to a certain extent, that what was right was right sort of thing, and I think it rubbed off. I think it does rub off.(17)

Most villagers knew their Bible well, having learnt verses from it both at school and Sunday school. The teaching of religion was closely supervised by the church. School log books record visits by the vicar to inspect the religious instruction. The school in Childswickham was closed on the

afternoon of April 11 1914 "to enable teachers and scholars to attend the funeral service for the late vicar".(18) Many respondents reported they still knew the collects, psalms and hymns by heart. Births, christenings, marriages and deaths were often recorded in a family Bible, thereby recording the history of the family in a religious context. One respondent related that her family Bible recorded a female ancestor had given birth to 23 children, many of whom were twins and that they had all lived long enough to be christened.

Harvest Festival in an agricultural community was a great occasion.

Harvest Festival the church was absolutely full. There were seats up the aisle and in the porch and outside they were. It was lovely and it was decorated beautiful with vegetables and fruits and wheat.(19)

The family reflected the same principles of hierarchy as society. The father was undisputed head and women and children were subordinated to him. The Church preached that this was God-given, and that as providence had ordained the different orders and gradations into which the human family was divided, this divine division should be maintained. Gender and class roles were reflected in the offices bestowed by the church. Many respondents reported that their fathers were church wardens; if their mothers had an office it was as church cleaner. The Sunday school teachers were often female but were recruited from the middle class and were often the village

teachers. The lessons were read by lay middle class readers. Mrs. AS's brother went on to technical college and became a lecturer. She remembers her mother's pride after the Second World War when his success was acknowledged by his being chosen to read the lesson for the memorial service for the headmaster of the village school.

He chose the lesson from the Second Chapter of the Corinthians, "When I was a child..." because Ernie Evely taught us these things by heart. My mother said, "You should have been to the memorial service. Our Henry he did read well, didn't he Joe?" Joe was our pet name for my dad. Joe said, "Aye". "That's why Tony Lee asked him to read the lesson, because he's a lecturer you see", said mother, "and his punctuations are perfect".(20)

For children Sunday school was obligatory. Most children were sent to the local Church of England village church, but in the villages which also contained a chapel those children who had a choice often preferred this because the preacher was less haughty than the vicar and more children's outings were provided - the latter was an important consideration in the days of very limited travel opportunities.

The Ebenezer Congregational chapel in Childswickham (built in 1843, but now demolished) was very active.

Freddy Morris ran the chapel, a dear old man, was a total abstainer ... And, of course, the visiting preachers were ordinary men who had very strong views and they would stand in the pulpit and they would shout, "Hell fire and brimstone". I was terrified.

Freddy Morris was a father figure to all us children. He took us on outings. He took us to Leamington one year and to Malvern, and he was a super, kindly old man, one of nature's gentlemen. But the vicar was very, very distant, and very cold and aloof in my view.

My aunt (a teacher) ran the church Sunday school and that was there we had our Sunday school lessons, and we sang, "All things bright and beautiful". We had to go to church in the morning, my mother made us go, but we voluntarily went to the chapel. Of course, a lot of the children, I remember, when we would sing these old hymns, they would shout and show off a bit, but Freddie Morris just laughed his way through. He was super, he really was.(21)

Another respondent, who came from a very poor family, also preferred chapel as a child. "I used to go to the chapel. We used to love it - better than church. They were more friendly."(22)

Mrs. AM sang in the chapel choir,

Freddy Morris used to bribe us to go, so we went - well, he used to take us on outings. And that used to get my dad's hair up, because dad was in the church choir for nearly seventy years. (23)

Mr. Maurice Andrews wrote about the Sunday school in Broadway,

The Rev. V. H. Patrick came to Broadway in 1923 and I was one of the first, if not the first child in the parish to be christened by him. At heart he was a very good man, and well- liked, but his ministry did not exactly inspire the villagers, and certainly not the young.

The Sunday school was always very well attended, not so much because the children wanted to go, but because it was considered the thing to do.(24)

Headmasters of Church of England schools often had to organise Sunday school. Mr. Timms of Broadway was organist and choirmaster as well, so the children were under his influence on Sunday too.

We went to church on Sunday. My mother was very keen. I still keep it up. Sunday school at ten o'clock up at the old school. My brother and I were got ready and packed off

on a Sunday morning. We had this little service and then we all came down in a crocodile to church. We went to Sunday school again in the afternoon at half past two and nearly always went again as a family at night.(25)

Miss Burrows writes in her memoirs:

At that time there was a gallery around the church and girls sat on the right side and boys on the left. We used to pull faces at one another across the church. Mr. Timms, headmaster, was also organist and choirmaster so you can imagine how he had to dash from Sunday school to church.(26)

It would, therefore, seem that though the Church of England was less overtly class-conscious as the period progressed, many children felt that the chapel was more welcoming. The pre-ordained nature of an individual's place in society and the need for meek acceptance of this by the children of the working class remained part of the message they received from the pulpit. Children were taught to say "sir" to the parson, the school master, the doctor and the local "gentry". As one respondent commented, "it created a distance". In church, as at school and at home, village children were "brought up to respect"(27) and to know their place.

CHAPTER 3 - "PUTTING THE CHILD IN ITS PLACE"
(c) CLASS

In this chapter oral evidence is examined in order to ascertain how village women and their families perceived their class status and how through cultural and social influences children were taught where they belonged. Was the gulf in social status maintained throughout the period and did the perception of class differences vary from village to village?

Throughout the nineteenth century and up until the First World War the rural working class were regarded almost as a caste apart by other classes in the village and in society in general. Newby wrote that the village represented a "dual community" with an elite of landlords, farmers, professional people and clergy and Rude's and Hobsbawm's "dark village", the local working class subculture with a strong sense of group identity.(1) Farmers and landowners possessed a near monopoly over employment. an authority "confirmed by their multiple occupancy of authoritarian roles - they were not only employers but also magistrates, councillors, landlords and school governors".(2) The men of the "ruling class" dominated politics, both at the national and local level (see chapter 8a). Their ladies led village social organisations. church and charities.

Expressions of social superiority often masked real fears of workers' radicalism and the effect on the social order if a more equitable society should be achieved. This fear often made itself manifest in the debates on village education (see chapter 3d). Newby pointed out "Village society, like any social hierarchy, was best stabilized by persuading those in subordinate positions to subscribe to the system which endorsed their own inferiority".(3) (See also footnote 4.)

This sense of natural superiority is evident in the writings of middle class observers of Cotswold life at the turn of the century, such as J. Arthur Gibbs. In A Cotswold Village he attributes "Hodge's" lack of knowledge to innate slowness rather than lack of education. Such middle class observations concerning the rural workers' childlike, clowning simplicity is reminiscent of attitude towards blacks displayed by white southerners in the United States during this period (see footnote 5).

Oral evidence demonstrated that in the smaller villages where there were few large houses, there was little sense of social class and phrases like "we all used to be very friendly together", and "up here everybody was sociable" were repeated time and again. The growth of market gardening in the Vale of Evesham gave former labourers and their families a certain independence vis-a-vis the gentry, who, while they may still

be their landlords, were no longer their direct employers. In open villages where market gardening was prominent only the school teacher, the vicar and the doctor had to be addressed as "sir". However, in Broadway, where there were many large houses, and in villages which still had a squire, there was a rigid social division. Here an almost feudal social structure remained in tact until the Second World War, although as noted later in this chapter, oral evidence illustrates the fact that the younger generation was beginning to question their parents' habitual servility.

All the large houses were occupied with families and a large staff, i.e. cook, kitchen maid, scullery maid, two house maids, parlour maid and butler. Sir Richard and Lady Lamb with four young sons lived at Tudor House. Sir Andrew and Lady Skeen lived at "Bally Broust" which is now "Hunter's Lodge". Lord and Lady Lifford lived at Austin House. Sir Arthur and Lady Blomfield lived at Springfield House.(6)

Wealthy and often titled employers paid minimal wages, but supplemented these with acts of benevolent paternalism. Personal ties and the principles of "noblesse oblige" kept villagers in grateful dependence. Mothers, trained in service, and aware that the family's livelihood often depended on the patronage of the wealthy, schooled their children to be deferential.

One respondent interpreted class divisions in terms of dress and manners. In the 1930s she worked in a shop in

Broadway which was often visited by what she termed "the toffs".

I used to think to myself, "Aren't they different from us." Their clothes were beautiful, very well made up and their perfume was super. An absolute race apart and it must have been, mustn't it, because of their background? I don't know what they were like at home. And of course they led social lives and they were all together, all the county people.(7)

Another respondent talking about the same period interpreted the class division politically:

There was almost a line of differential. We used to say it was the Labourites and the Toryites and that was all about it.(8)

But as examined later, class division in the countryside did not always reflect political allegiance as it did in urban areas, as noted in chapter 8a. Most farm labourers and their families continued to vote Conservative. One father came from Birmingham. He voted Labour and as an outsider looked with a jaundiced eye on the social structure of the area. His daughter was in service in the 1930s.

It was always "madame, or marm" whatever, even in my day. You always addressed them in that way. Well, she (her employer) was a lady as I say. Because this is one of the things my father was so dead against. He always said he was as good as anybody else. If anyone called him, "Brighton" instead of "Mr." Brighton, he'd call them by their surname. Mum was brought up among these people, and she was brought up to more or less respect them all, or treat them with respect, let's say that. But dad was so different.(9)

Most respondents felt an enormous social divide between themselves and the "nobs".

It was "Sir" and "Madame". Even to the day my father died, he touched his cap if he saw anybody.(10)

Oh Lord yes. You looked up to those sort of people. Mother was always very strict on things like that you know, being polite to them.(11)

One respondent, a Catholic, came into frequent contact with Mary Anderson (Madame de Navarro), a prominent socialite who maintained the tradition of noblesse oblige and who played a leading part in the Catholic Church in Broadway. In return for patronage villagers maintained "respect", though this was waning by the 1930s.

Well, yes you did in those days. You had a certain respect for these people. More respect like for a doctor in those days than now. Of course, not so much in my day but in mother's. Mary Anderson, you see, was the big one in Broadway then, especially with the Catholics. She was a Catholic. You know she'd present prizes at the school and that sort of thing. (Did you see her?) Yes..She was lovely. Yes, I sat by her at tea once up at the house. We had a sewing guild to do with the church and she gave us an afternoon tea, for the members, you know. She was head of it. Yes, she did a lot for the village, a lot of kindnesses. Well, one instance, I remember my mother saying when her father was bedridden for nine years, she sent four men to get him downstairs on a Sunday afternoon into her garden to have tea.(12)

One mother sewed for the big houses. Like many village women she was dependent for her livelihood on the wealthy gentry . She was a keen supporter of the status quo, and was especially respectful of the very top of the social pyramid.

She used to go dotty about the royal family..To give you some idea what mother was like. We were at supper, this big table, ten was it we used to sit, could sit. White topped table, you know, scrubbed. And at that time we had a chappie living with us then, it was the late twenties, early thirties, he was the boss of the Stop Me and Buy One boxes, icecream - Walls. -- And the conversation came up about the royal family, and I said, "It's about time we had a change. Old Queen Mary she's poxed up to the eyebrows." Before I knew where I was there was a massive slap across the side of my face, "Never you say words like that on the

royal family", she said, "or I'll knock your head off next time." (13)

It was not only his mother who tried to instill respect into her son,

And the old head schoolmaster, if you didn't salute him out on the street, he'd give you the cane. He'd think nothing of giving you six strokes and fetching welts upon you. (14)

However, he concluded by saying "it never done me no harm to say "sir" to the schoolmaster, the vicar, and the doctor "who was held in great prestige".

Another respondent, born 1920, also reflects the younger generation's questioning of the deference of their elders:

Mother was a scullery maid..She was always - it used to annoy me really - she was always, what shall I say, servile to these people. You know what I mean? She'd call them "Sir". I mean she'd call the vicar, "Sir". And I'd say, "Mum, you shouldn't. He's no better than you are". They were brought up to do it. Mind you we've gone too far the other way. (Were you brought up to say, "Sir"?) Only to the headmaster..No, I'm, afraid I was always a bit of a rebel. I never sort of felt that I was any worse than anyone else. I mean I worked for Sir Gerald Navarro about 19 or 20 years, although I got on well with them, I respected, but I never "sired" or "lady'd" them, because I knew them before they were "sir" and "lady". There was no necessity to say it. Some people would come and say, "my lady", but I never did. I thought, "Why the heck should I? It's only just the fact that he'd been made a Sir". No disrespect. I don't disrespect anyone, but I don't feel that you should grovel to them. Well, it used to annoy me when my mother, she used to "sir" the vicar at one time like, when we were small. Well I wouldn't "sir" him, he's no more than we are. But there you are, I suppose if you're brought up to do it you do it. (15)

The gentry of Broadway, reflecting society as a whole, was subject to change. The opening of the railway brought artists and writers and a new economically powerful elite of

industrialists and business men who eventually ousted the aristocracy, but the concept of the "gentleman" was a "marvellously flexible instrument." (16) The large estate of Middle Hill was bought by the Flower brewing family; Sir George Hingley invested his foundry fortune and Mr. George Hookam, his munitions fortune in Broadway property. The most important arrivals for Broadway, however, were the Russell family who restored the inn and eventually opened a furniture factory which offered a new and alternative employment for working class families.

The Russells moved up to Snowhill where they joined the Milvains as the social elite.

There were two families, what we called the "gentry", which was S. P. Russell, who owned the Lygon Arms and all that, he lived up at the top, and the Milvains were the other family. They were the best, they were ever so good to us. The best people who ever lived in this village. Well, they did all sorts of things for us when we were younger. They run a boys' cricket team, and they used to take us to the other villages weekends, pony and trap or an old cart. They run a library every Sunday at their house. You could go down. He taught us boxing. He'd been a bit of a bare-knuckle fighter in his younger days ..He used to find us work in our school holidays, cutting thistles and nettles. It was just something for us to do and he paid us for it. (17)

In return for deference to those who ruled the social, political and religious hierarchy, working class families would accept such paternalistic concern for their welfare. It is interesting to note that the prominent families who demonstrated the most concern for the good of their fellow

villagers were not the old aristocratic families but the self-made men who moved into the area. While rigid class differences were upheld during the period there is evidence of a tendency for the younger generation, growing up in the thirties, to question the deference displayed by their elders. While they mentioned "respect" they disassociated themselves with what they saw as their mothers' servility.

CHAPTER 3 - "PUTTING THE CHILD IN ITS PLACE"
(d) SCHOOL

In this chapter oral evidence is examined in order to ascertain how schooling moulded the futures of village girls. Was the outcome of primary education simply to condition girls to be good domestic servants, as Gill Blunden has suggested?(1) Or was it to "civilise" the working class and to bring the organisation of family life into line with "middle-class values and canons of respectability", as Carol Dyhouse has suggested?(2)

State primary education had been introduced in 1870 (see footnote 3). The teacher, like the preacher, was viewed not only as an instructor but as a social regulator. In the debates on education during the 19th century he or she was seen as "an instrument for social discipline, who would combat pauperism, induce self-respect and reduce the high levels of urban and rural crime".(4) In 1908 a middle class observer wrote, "Education has extended its benign influence on the peasantry ...As a result of personal inquiry, I find that the animal appetites of the latter are, like their mental cravings, less gross than formerly".(5)

Despite such moral injunctions on the benefit of primary education, oral research shows that for many village girls - and often boys - schooling was a luxury that had to be

sacrificed as early as possible for the benefit of the family as their earning power was necessary for the household economy (see chapter 3e).

The village schools which the respondents attended were often very basic, frequently one room divided into two classes. The Education Act of 1902 established local education authorities to supervise elementary and, for the exceptional few, secondary education. However, for the vast majority, who left school at the minimum age allowed, the curriculum offered was as basic as the school buildings. It was limited to reading, writing, arithmetic, religion, with history and geography thrown in to reinforce the ideals of patriotism and support of empire. Vocational training was strictly segregated by gender with carpentry for the boys, and needlework and domestic training for the girls. Empire Day was celebrated with pomp as witnessed by a teacher's entry in the school log book on 17 May 1918,

Today, Friday, we observed Empire Day. I gave a short address and a medal to the children - patriotic songs were sung. The children marched past and saluted the flag. Collections made during the week were given to the Overseas Club.(6)

The teachers' qualifications varied. By the turn of the century it was usual for teachers to have qualified by attending a training college from the age of 17 or 18, but there were still many teachers who had qualified by the pupil-teacher apprenticeship scheme whereby promising, often

working class, youngsters could enter teaching as soon as they left school. Ideally this practical education "on the job" was supplemented by instruction in a training centre, but as Pamela Horn commented, "in country areas, where schools were scattered and pupil-teachers comparatively thin on the ground, such schemes were not practicable".(7) Observation at the local grammar school was substituted.

A respondent from Childswickham who started school in 1910 describes the village school then: "The school room was divided into two. There was a screen across. It was altered before the First World War - about 1913."(8)

In the First World War the school was forced to close each day at 2.50 p.m. in order to "make possible economy in coal which is rapidly increasing in cost owing to the war conditions". The school was also closed for three half days a week all September and the first week in October to enable the children to pick blackberries for the army and navy.(9)

Another respondent started in the same school in 1927. Her aunt was a pupil-teacher there.

I went to school in the village. We had a headmaster called Ernie Evelyn, he was a Welshman. A good disciplinarian, very firm, but he was an excellent headmaster. And then there was my aunt Rachel, Rachel Newbury. She was a teacher. She went to grammar school after she left school to observe. She didn't go to a grammar school, not as students did, she went to observe. She was a very intelligent person. And then she became a

school teacher. She taught here for years. There was a third teacher. Miss Pearce, who lived on the Broadway Road. She was the infant teacher, who wasn't popular. She really wasn't an infant teacher at all.(10)

The Childswickham school log book notes that Rachel Newbury took time off school to take the Oxford Seminar examination in July 1914. The log book notes that another student teacher joined the school in 1926 and trained in a similar way:

Miss Sylvia Whitely commenced duty as a student teacher at a salary of £28 per annum. She was born 4th April 1908 and has been a student teacher at Stanton Church of England School since 1925. She attends Prince Henry's Grammar School Evesham on Thursday each week.(11)

The strict discipline of the children's home environment was mirrored in school.

Rachel used to hit you on the top of the head with a ruler - and the history book as well. Miss Pearce would come behind you and slap you down the back. I only had the cane once and I drew my hand back and Mr. Evelyn hurt his hand on the table, and he didn't bother again.(12)

Parents backed up school discipline. A caning at school was often followed by the belt at home. Schools also sought the assistance of the local policeman. The Childswickham School log book reports in 1920 that:

Inspector Hall of the Worcs. Police visited the school and cautioned the boys about using catapults and ordered those who possessed one to bring it to school to be destroyed and this has been done.(13)

The Broadway school log book in 1938 reports:

The Police Serjeant came to see three boys who had misbehaved themselves on the previous Sunday. They had lain sticks on the road in front of and blocking the passage of cars.(14)

Mrs. AN, born in 1904. attended Childswickham school. She was a pupil in 1912 when the Trustees. unable to find funding for the additional classroom required. handed the one room building over to the Local Education Authority(15). so that the extra room Mrs. BR recalled being built in 1913 could be added. Families were sad to see the two-room school close in the 1981. For all its inadequacies the village school was an integral part of the community. and attending it was a family tradition.

There's no village school here now. We were four generations went to this school - mother, me. my daughter and her children.(16)

With the fall in birthrate in the countryside, the closure of small schools was already in evidence in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. Miss BE taught at Bricklehampton village school. "one big room divided by a curtain". She reports.

In the '20s education began to change and village schools with only small attendances were closed. so Great Comberton was closed first and then in 1922 Bricklehampton School.(17)

Of the 473 elementary schools in Gloucester which the local authority took over in 1903. seventy-seven had been closed by 1936.(18) The Snowhill Village School, described later, was amongst those closed.

The Education Code of 1876 stated that domestic economy must be included in the curriculum of every girl. Sewing. knitting, laundry work and later cookery were taught. The Childswickham School log book notes that the vicar's wife

called to "spend some time inspecting the sewing class". The county instructress of sewing is also recorded as inspecting the schools. Records show that school needlework was sold, for example in September 1915, "14/-d (was) received for sale of garments made in school." (19) The girls were well schooled in the important art of making and mending clothes to prepare them for one of their major roles in life. It was considered "undignified for a woman not to be able to mend and to make well" (20)

The good habits cultivated by needlework were listed.

In addition to the practical benefits of making the girls useful at home, and good needlewomen in the future, they are, by means of the lessons in cutting-out and needlework skilfully and intelligently given, trained to habits of cleanliness, neatness, industry, thoughtfulness, contrivance, economy, good taste in arranging, and in general carefulness. (21)

Making do and mending were of greater importance for many village girls than fancy sewing, and this was acknowledged in the teaching handbooks:

The actual needlework of the poor, perhaps, consists more of mending than of making; hence the importance of teaching girls to mend and to turn old things about. It is one of the means by which thrift and economy can be inculcated. It is a good plan to allow the girls occasionally to bring mending from their homes to the schools. Valuable lessons may be given upon repairing the old garments...We have seen a little jersey for a child of eighteen months made out of a pair of old stockings. (22)

The sewing machine was making its appearance in many village homes at the turn of the century, and it was recommended that its use was taught to the senior girls.

The value of a sewing-machine is great in a household. It is a most useful means of saving time and expense if dressmaking be done at home..We have seen the use of a hand sewing-machine very successfully taught to the senior girls in several schools as a reward for industrious excellence in plain needlework. Always remembering that hand-work is of the greater importance, there is no reason why girls should not be also taught to work a hand sewing-machine at school if circumstances permit.(23)

A small school like Childswickham had no facilities for the teaching of cookery. The school log book reports on June 12, 1920 "The twelve oldest girls in the school today commence a full-time course in Domestic Science in the Education Committee's Travelling Van stationed on the Village Green". From February 13 to March 5, 1921, "eleven girls from the lower school commenced their cooking course as the older girls have finished".(24) In the 1930s the girls went to classes at the old school in Broadway every Friday. One respondent enjoyed the cooking, but suffered embarrassment because her market gardening family was impoverished by the Depression.

I dreaded Fridays because we had to take certain ingredients. And I used to dread in case mum hadn't got enough money to give me to go to the butcher in Broadway to buy our ingredients, like suet and a small quantity of meat. Or take things from the house which we didn't have which I had to go and buy. But somehow we managed. But when I walked into that room in Broadway Old School, the smell of baking! I'll never forget it! Because it smelled good. It was food to me and it was warm. The two things I needed.(25)

The village school Bob Hodge describes in Snowhill was similar to that in Childswickham, although it was closed earlier - in 1929 It was later converted into a village hall. Most children began school at the age of five, but some schools, like

Snowhill and Broadway, provided a nursery class which took children of three and four. Mrs. AK from Saintbury explained that like many children she could not take advantage of this, "We couldn't go until we were five because we had miles to walk".(26) The policy of the Department of Education was to cut back on the number of places for three to five year olds. In 1901 there were 610,989 such places; by 1911 this had been reduced to 332,888.(27) Snowhill School still provided nursery places in the 1920s.

Snowhill had its own little village school, which was always full. It stands in the centre of the village, and its outward appearance hasn't changed at all. The school bell is still on top of the roof... Some of us were only 3 to 4 years old when we started, but we were only a few yards from home, and our mothers would keep an eye on us at playtimes, et cetera. There were two teachers. The infant teacher was a village person, and about the only thing she taught us was religion and good manners (something the children don't seem to be taught today).

The school was very cold in the winter, as it had a very high ceiling and the only heating was an open fire. But we never saw much of the fire as the teacher's desk was right in front of it. And she sat with her back to it, so she was the only person who was warm.

On very cold mornings, the desks were moved into the middle of the room, and we all marched round and round, singing, "Here we go round the mullberry (sic) bush" while the teacher played the piano. After about half an hour of that we were warm enough to do our lessons.

There was no running water and the toilets were two buckets, which were emptied by two of the bigger boys in holes dug in a plot of land attached to the playground which was used as school gardens. We named the toilets "dock-leaf dell" because there was always a shortage of newspaper, so a handful of dock leaves were used as there were always plenty growing in the playground.

About 40 children attended the school at that time. A few came from neighbouring farms, and they would come into

school with their boots plastered with mud after taking short cuts across ploughed fields.(28)

After the village school closed, the children had to walk either to Stanton or Broadway. Most of their parents chose to send their children to Broadway though it was a three mile journey as opposed to two miles to Stanton.

The school was closed when I was 12 years old, so I only had two years at Broadway school, as we left when we were 14.

There was a lot of ill feeling in the village when the school was closed. I believe the reason they gave was that they couldn't get a teacher to stay. That was probably true as they had about four teachers in my short time there.

Being a Church of England school, the vicar (who was vicar of Stanton and Snowhill) had a big say in the school affairs, and we were told that we all had to go to Stanton School, which was a Church of England school. But most of our parents thought differently and decided to send us to Broadway which was a council school. I believe that caused more ill-feeling, although two or three of the "yes-men's" families went to Stanton.

Going to Broadway school was quite a big thing for us. Almost like going to college; what with proper classrooms, central heating, water taps and electric lights. It was quite a change from our primitive little school.(29)

Broadway school, unlike those of the surrounding villages, was new and big enough to have all the modern conveniences. It was built during the First World War. In 1928 the school log book reports it had three class rooms: two measuring 20' x 20-1/2' accommodating classes 1 and 2 each containing 40 pupils, and class 3 (babies) measuring 20' x 19' and accommodating 32.(30) It replaced the old Church of England school on the High Street which was started by a village educational charity

(the Thomas Hodge Trustees) in a former inn, the Bell and Crown and extended by the National Schools in 1869.(31) Miss AQ remembered the old church school in Broadway.

A local girl called Ethel, who had left school at 13, helped my mother in the house and shop, and the day I had my fifth birthday she took me to school at the Church School. The school master and mistress lived in a house behind the school where there was a large play-ground. I was taken through the yard and up stone stairs to the junior class rooms. On the right there was a small room for the three-year old babies, presided over by teacher Bessie, a very much loved person. She was there for many years and all the village called her "teacher Bessie". I was taken into a large room divided into two, class 1 and class 2. There is, I think, still a bell on the outside there. It used to be rung every day at five to nine and five to one-thirty. There were no school meals or milk. We used to run home for dinner and run back. We dare not be late. Mr. and Mrs. Timms were very strict. I think we all hated Mrs. Timms, but rather liked Mr. Timms and called him "Old Billy" behind his back.

I progressed through class 1 and class 2 downstairs to the Big Room, where there was standard 4, 5, and 6. It was a very cold and lofty room and in winter, when we had frost and snow, we were called out about six at a time to have a warm. There were two big fireplaces stacked with coal and all the heat going up the chimney.

I was one of the first to be transferred to the new school when it was finished and, of course, the change was a great improvement - warm, light and airy.(32)

Sid Knight remembered Teacher Bessie with affection and defended "those old-fashioned teachers without degrees or diplomas..."

All except the grim-faced, acid-voiced wife of Billy Timms, the schoolmaster, who blighted many young lives and never cracked her face into a smile.(33)

Another respondent agreed with his assessment of Mrs. Timms. With so few teachers per school a bad teacher could have an undue influence.

I always remember the schoolmistress. She always used to have a thimble on her and if she wanted to knock you, she'd give you a clout with this thimble if you didn't behave yourself.(34)

For children on farms or in villages which had no school, transport was a problem. Bob Hodge and his friends had to walk from Snowhill to Broadway.

There were no school buses or meals those days. We started off about 8.00 a.m. to walk the three and a half miles, taking a few sandwiches, which we had often eaten before we arrived at the school, and got home about 4.30 to 5.00 p.m. which made quite a long day. We did occasionally get a lift home on an old lorry, but there was hardly any traffic on the roads those days.(35)

The Hodge boys solved their problem by sharing a bike.

The first bicycle we had was an old ladies' back peddling brake, which was between the three of us, as my elder brother Jack had left school by then. I think it cost my dad about five shillings. We all learned to ride on it. I think that I was about thirteen and a half years old, and the last few months I was at school we took it in turns to ride it to school. One of us would ride it to the bottom of Snowhill hill, then leave it in the hedge for one of the others who were walking behind to ride on until they caught you up. There were always arguments about the last one to ride it coming home as that was the one who had to push it most of the way up Snowhill hill.(36)

Dr. Houghton recalled that the "two Meadows children used to ride down from Snowhill on one pony and have it tethered all day on the Green".(37) In 1933, however, this situation improved. The school log book notes, "Rec'd notice from Worcester re the conveying of children from very long distance. The Middle Hill Estate children will be conveyed from November 1 - morning and evening".(38)

In bad weather many children who had a long walk to school simply stayed home, as entries from the Childswickham School log book indicate. May 15, 1915 was "a very wet day and most of the children living at a distance have been absent"; 21 December 1916 "Snow reduced attendance about 50%".(39) One respondent walked a mile and a half from Saintbury to Willersey in the winter, though she cut across the fields in the summer. Another walked from Wickhamford to Badsey.

I suppose it was about a mile and a half; mind you, it seemed an awful long way, especially if the weather was bad. And I can remember my father, he worked in Badsey at the time for market gardeners - the brook used to flood between Badsey and Wickhamford - and he used to fetch us home on the dray, -come through the floods. And you weren't always clad for it you know.(40)

A respondent from Childswickham went to the village school and then to Blackminster Secondary Modern School which was opened in 1939.

We used to have to go on the train from Broadway then. In the winter you know it used to be dark when we got back to Broadway station. Nobody thought it was odd that children were coming down the road in the dark. None of our parents met us and, of course, the children that lived at Murcot used to have to walk all the way to Murcot. When we were at this (Childswickham) village school they used to let the Murcot children out a quarter of an hour earlier so they could get home before the dark. And of course lunchtime they didn't go home - we did. Those who had a long way to come, they had to take sandwiches. Fish and chip man used to come on Fridays, so they used to have fish and chips then.(41)

Children attending Broadway School from outlying villages like Snowhill were teased.

We were called all sorts of names when we first started school. The one that stuck with us was "the Snowhill Swede knawers" (sic) because at that time fields of swedes were grown on the hill for fodder for the sheep, and

I think they had the idea that we lived on them, although we did cook quite a few.(42)

Schools contributed both to the sickness and health of the children. Epidemics spread quickly in the crowded class rooms. School log books report frequent closing for outbreaks of measles, and less frequently scarlet fever. Head lice also quickly spread and there are frequent reports of children being sent home in "a very verminous condition". Preventative health measures became more frequent with each decade. Broadway log book from the 1920s reports visits by a school dentist, nurse and medical inspector and a scheme for cheap milk was started in 1934.(43) As early as 1914, Childswickham log book reports "1/2 gal. jar of Virol donated by Miss Wedgwood for Anni, John and Louise Mumford who were stated by the medical inspector to be in need of nourishment."(44) In extreme cases the school stepped in to protect children. *Thus in March 1918 Inspector Stokes called at Childswickham School "and took Rose, William and Mary Spiers to the workhouse. The mother has been prosecuted for neglecting the children and sent to prison for one month."*(45) The records of the Evesham Union workhouse show that the family was in and out of the workhouse from 1913 to the 1920s.(46)

The goal of the village school was to produce tractable future agricultural and domestic workers, together with manpower for the army, navy and the colonies. The necessary

training for this role entailed imbuing children with habits of cleanliness, patriotism, docility and obedience. Too much learning was not only unnecessary but could be socially disturbing. For example, Pamela Horn quotes the secretary to the Board of Education, Robert Morant, whose philosophy towards secondary schooling in 1897 accepted the prevalent view that "working-class children must not be given an education which would give them too ambitious an outlook." (47) While under the scholarship system set up under the 1902 Education Act the ablest elementary pupils from the village school could in theory proceed to the secondary sector, and the number of such scholarships was increased from 1907, even in 1924 "only about five per cent of entrants to secondary schools in rural areas were the offspring of agricultural labourers". (48) As is borne out by the evidence presented in the next chapter, even when such scholarships were won, children were often prevented from taking up free places by family poverty, the distance to the school, and the often repeated problem of the expense of school uniforms. Up until the end of the period, despite the educational reorganisations which took place in the 1920s and the 1930s, most respondents still attended the all-age elementary schools which had catered for their parents' and grandparents' generations. As Pamela Horn points out, "Not until the passage of the Education Act of 1944 did secondary education become a reality for most country children." (49) The village school produced obedient, respectful children who "knew

their place". As noted, in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, girls were schooled in needlework and domestic training in order to prepare them for their roles as servants.

CHAPTER 3 - "PUTTING THE CHILD IN ITS PLACE"
(e) LEAVING SCHOOL

Most children, boys as well as girls, left school at thirteen or fourteen in order to help their family's economy. In this chapter oral evidence is examined in order to determine whether this early termination of schooling was the result of family poverty, the inadequacies of the school system to promote secondary education, or both. Did girls sacrifice their opportunities for schooling in order that their brothers could continue in their education?

Compared with their Victorian grandparents and greatgrandparents children in this period, starting work at 13 or 14, made a late entrance into the permanent workforce. When a bill in 1867 proposed to prohibit the employment for hire of boys under 8 and girls under 13 years, the Worcestershire Chamber of Agriculture discussed this question with regard to the school-leaving age.

The Chamber agreed that all children should learn to read, write, and cypher properly, and attend school for a certain period; 10 years, however, was not at all an unfitting age for boys to begin work and if they did not commence to use their hands until 12 years old they would probably become very clumsy labourers.(1)

The Elementary Education Act of 1870, which set up School Boards elected by the parishes and boroughs to provide elementary education, caused many to express the view that it "would occasion great hardships among the labouring

classes".(2) It was not only the loss of children's earnings which caused this hardship. It was not until 1891 that school fees were abolished. The argument that "free education would pauperise the labourer: he would not value something he did not pay for" was used to fight the idea of free education.(3)

Carolyn Mason, writing of Snowhill, noted that

The education acts of the eighteen-seventies were not popular in rural communities where boys started to work at the age of about ten and girls went into service, both providing a welcome supplement to the family income.(4)

Not only their families but their employers were against the "over-education of the labourers' children", a view which Pamela Horn notes was "constantly on the lips of rural employers".(5) E. N. Bennett in Problems of Village Life (1913),(6) noted that compulsory education was blamed by some farmers as "responsible for restlessness and the willingness to listen to 'agitators' on the part of rural workers" (see footnote 7).

Attendance at the Church of England school in Childswickham during the 1870s was irregular.

Constantly Mr. Hartley (the vicar) had to complain of the indifference of the parents, and of the irregular attendance of the children. Even after the passing of the Act of 1870 making school attendance compulsory, it was easy for parents to obtain a labour certificate stating that their children were "beneficially and necessarily at work when not at school".(8)

It was necessary for the Rev. and Mrs. Hartley to run a Night School to enable illiterate villagers to learn to read and write.(9)

Poverty was the chief cause of such parental "indifference" in the 1870s, as a verse from an old Agricultural Labourers' Union song emphasized:

He used to find it hard enough to give his children food,
But he sent them to the village school as often as he
could;
But though he knew that school was good, they must have
bread and clothes,
So he had to send them to the fields to scare away the
crows.(10)

The need for labour at home and on the land continued to affect school attendance well into the twentieth century. Teachers found it difficult to bring non-attenders to book. The Childswickham school log book for example often notes, "attendance better in the infant room than the older". For the years 1915 and 1916 it records the following complaints:

8 February 1915: "Henry Agg, aged 12, has been given permission by the Education Committee to work on a farm until March 31st."

June 1915: "Some of the older boys have been absent without permission to work on farm or garden during the busy season."

August 1916: "Attendance still low, many being at work in the gardens."

The problem was still widespread enough in 1920 for the Attendance Officer to visit the school in April to leave "a notice on the employment of children which the teacher read to the older children".(11)

There was little difference in the school leaving age during the period. Looking back, the women interviewed frequently expressed regret at having to leave school so young, but at the time they left school they were realistic about their lot. They were conditioned to obey their elders and to work to help support the family. The needs of the family were paramount and this was accepted. Many children had been working while at school in part-time jobs or helping at home. Few of their school friends continued school education after 13 or 14, and there was peer pressure to leave school. The Childswickham School log book notes a complaint to Police Inspector Hale about young workers passing the school who had been "staring in the windows and rudely shouting".(12) Some respondents felt that the early leaving age was an advantage as far as school discipline was concerned.

There was no cheek. Well, one thing you didn't go to school until you were so old did you? Obviously that's a lot of it today. They're grown up aren't they, the kids at school?(13)

Few respondents had any distinct ambitions upon leaving school; most took whatever jobs were available. Boys' labour was needed on the land, and it was often considered a waste of money to educate a girl who would "only get married".

The only professions for which village girls in this time period could realistically aim were nursing and teaching, but

these had a long training and a marriage bar. Cadbury noted that working class girls were being deliberately excluded from nursing before the First World War: hospitals lowered their salaries during training "in order to secure a higher class of applicants".(14) Marriage and looking after a family were the goals towards which the girls were conditioned. Most girls went into service. It was somewhat less arduous than going on the land, which was increasingly thought of "men's work". Service was considered a good training for marriage. Most girls left home at the same time as they left school, but they continued to send money home.

Secondary modern education was only introduced just before the end of the period (1939). However, a secondary grammar school education was a theoretical possibility for the select few who passed the scholarship. In reality it was often considered an irrelevant extravagance for either sex. Whereas middle class parents could afford the fees to send their children to grammar school, working class parents whose able children had won a free place could often not afford to delay their children's earning potential, provide the uniform or the travel expenses. The NUT accused the Board of Education of "thwarting and hindering the higher educational interests of the children of the working classes".(15) (See also footnote 16.)

Gaining a scholarship place at grammar school was not a goal most families encouraged. Many parents saw further education as a luxury they could not afford. In addition many schools lacked the teaching standards necessary to prepare those pupils who desired further education. One respondent, born in 1914, who herself won a scholarship and whose son also won one, explained how difficult it was to pass the scholarship examination from a village school even in the 1940s. She transferred her son from Great Comberton school to Pershore,

Because he wouldn't have had a hope of passing the scholarship up there, because little old Miss Whent, she was well past retirement age. She wouldn't have school milk. She taught them a bit, they knew every saint's day, but we mentioned it about him sitting for the scholarship, and oh no. No one had ever sat for the scholarship, so why should they start? (17)

When her son sat the examination from Pershore school she recalls there were only three entries from the school. His was the only pass.

It wasn't compulsory, the 11-plus. Only if your parents wished you to, you sat for what they called the "scholarship". They only took 30. You went for a written exam, and then an oral exam as well, if you'd passed the written. 30 out of the whole area. It was a big area. It included Cropthorne, Fladbury, the other side of Evesham, Badsey, Willersey and Broadway - in fact there were only less than 400 pupils altogether. The scholarship class was 30 pupils and all the rest were fee payers... They were very particular, weren't they? I think they went into the parents as well, didn't they? You had to sign a declaration to stay till the July after your 16th birthday you see when you started school. That was a long time to keep the children on, really, in those days. And especially boys because they wanted them to work in the fields.(18)

Despite the need for boys' labour on the land, two respondents reported that their education was sacrificed for that of their brothers. One respondent, born in 1922, left Childswickham village school at 14 without taking her scholarship examination. Her brother, Henry, continued his schooling. She recalls,

I wanted to go to grammar school and we had inspectors quite often. Oh they were so nice. And they'd come and talk to us individually and I used to love what was called composition, writing essays, and I used to love it. And I can remember this inspector coming to me and he put his arm on my shoulder and he said, "We shall see you at grammar school soon, and I thought "grammar school"! I really wanted to go, but, you see, they couldn't afford my uniform. Also we had to take what was called the scholarship exam, and I had shingles at the time. Well, the doctor told my mother that it was a nervous complaint and that I shouldn't really go to the grammar school. But you see that's not the case. It's a virus that attacks the nerves. But I couldn't have gone, no I couldn't...

There were no regrets on my mother's part that I didn't go to the grammar school. And it's ever so difficult to explain my feelings. Because there was I a little, cold, worried little girl, and I used to think, "the grammar school and all those books and all that wood panelling and all that writing, and oh that would be nice, that would be lovely. Different world." And yet at the back of my mind I wondered how I would cope. Because you see with a background like mine you had no confidence. I'm not talking generally about the other children in the village. You see, my mother didn't instill me with confidence...

My mother was determined that Henry wasn't going to work on the land because mother didn't like to think that she was one of the struggling members of the village. She wanted to do better, which was only natural, wasn't it? ... Anyway, Henry went to Blackminster (Secondary Modern School) at about eleven. It had just opened then (1939). Anyway he did well. Was very good at mathematics. She went to see the headmaster and she said, "I want my son to go to Cheltenham Technical College". So she took her son personally to Cheltenham Technical College to see the principal. She wasn't backwards in coming forwards.(19)

Mrs. AS's brother went to Technical College and she worked at J. B. Ball, the grocer's shop in Broadway, to help support him.

Miss BI's schooling was also sacrificed for the sake of her brothers. She attended the Catholic school in Broadway.

There were three classrooms, three sisters. I didn't go to the Evesham Grammar School which was the usual thing from here. My older and younger brother both went. But in those days it wasn't thought so much necessary for a girl to go on, and, as I say, my older brother was there and the year he started there my younger brother arrived; and I think with the expenses all round, I would have had to pay for uniforms, but as it wasn't quite so necessary, they didn't push it. Well you had to get a scholarship to go, but I think a certain amount you had to pay. I didn't sit for it at all. (Did you regret it?) Yes I did really. Then I didn't think anything about it, and then I got a new baby to look after. I was the sort of person who was a bit scared of going and doing anything a bit different.(20)

Mrs. BO went to Broadway school in the 1930s. Like many of the girls, she wanted to become a nurse. She was cross-eyed and had to have two eye operations.

It meant that I was away from school a term and that term I should have sat for the grammar school. So I couldn't sit for the grammar school. And I couldn't sit for the next year. If my birthday had been in June instead of May I should have had a chance for the second year. And my mother went to the school and she said, "Oh well, perhaps you wouldn't have passed." The teacher said, "Oh yes she would, she'd have walked through". And that was it. So I left school when I was fourteen and I went to Domestic Science school in Gloucester. I got a scholarship you see. That was two terms. Then I went into children's nursing. I got into nursing, but not hospital nursing.(21)

Mrs. BO became a nursery maid. She thought about doing nursing in the forces in the Second World War,

But by the time I was old enough the war had progressed and you had to go where they sent you, and they sent me to Dr. Barnadoes. There was nothing you could do, you had to go where they wanted you to go. But anyway, I had one

daughter and she's a nurse. She's a senior sister. But things are different today. There are chances there. You can go later on if you want. You see you couldn't (then).(22)

Mrs. BR. born in 1905. was the youngest in a family of three girls. Having no brothers. and with her brother-in-law in the army. her labour was needed to help on her father's small market garden. Her parents regretted the arrival of a third baby girl and she too felt life would have been better if she could have changed gender:

I ought to have been a boy and then perhaps they would have liked me a bit better. I wanted to be a boy. They had a better time of it. boys did. They always have had...

I was thirteen when I left school. You could stay until you was fourteen. but I was supposed to work on the land. I did NOT want to leave school. I loved school. Father must have said I had to leave. Not many stayed on. If I had a choice as they do now. I'd not go on the land. It's a hard life. but I had no choice. My sister-in-law went in service. It was a case of having to. You bet your bottom dollar girls today are luckier.

Nobody's parents ever said anything about what they wanted their children to be when they grew up. You left school and went on the land and that was it. They never said you're going to do this or that.(23)

Another respondent. born in 1902 in Broadway. was also sorry to leave school. Like her contemporary. Mrs. BR. her labour was needed in the family business because men were being called up for war.

I didn't want to leave school. but it was just at the time of the First World War and we'd got this business and all the men were all having to go in the army and that. I've been a bit soft in me time. I never wanted to stay in the business. not quite honestly. I wanted to go away and be a nurse. That was my great ambition. I wanted to go away and be a nurse. I could never get away. Do you know I used to go to bed at night and cry. I used to cry because I wanted to go. but I couldn't. There was so much to do

and my mother was never well. I just went on. Mother didn't encourage the idea. She was too glad to have me at home.(24)

Some girls were only too glad to leave school and help full-time at home. Mrs. BK, born in 1902, couldn't wait to leave school at 13 and help in the family baker's shop.

In fact I was in the shop before I was 13. I used to weigh when I was about ten, they say they couldn't keep me away from the scales.(25)

Another respondent, born in 1909, had no regrets about leaving school at 13.

I was glad to leave school. I didn't like school, I don't know why. I wanted to leave school when I was thirteen because I didn't like it. You had to have a little register and I hadn't made enough attendances, so the schoolmaster said, "Well if you'd like to come back and finish your attendances you can help the nursery teacher... There were three teachers - the headmaster, the head teacher, and the nursery teacher... I stayed at home until I was seventeen and then I went as a nanny to Westmancotes in Evesham.(26)

Many of the bright students were resigned at the time about leaving school early. It was later that they regretted it. They reiterated the common tale of family poverty.

Well I passed for the grammar school but couldn't go because we couldn't afford it, could we? (Were you disappointed?) Well you didn't take much notice, did you? Just carried on. Oh, in later life, yes. You learn with life, don't you? (27)

I can always remember we had our photographs taken. Well, we had two lots taken in quite a short time. My mother bought the first which was thruppence, you know, and then when I left school we had another one taken, and my father was in hospital at the time because he had a poisoned leg. He had septicaemia and at times he was sort of pretty groggy in hospital. And she couldn't afford this thruppence for this photograph. "You'll have to take it back", she said. And the headmaster bought it and gave it to me. I always got on very well with the headmaster. I was head girl at the time. I was head girl when I left

school. And he bought this photograph, and I've always kept it. There's not many headmasters that would do that... I've often said today children leave school with high ambitions. When we left school you took what was going. You didn't have a choice.(28)

It was a woman's duty to look after family members who were sick. (See chapter 8b, The Extended Family.) This responsibility interrupted or terminated many girls' schooling. In July 1920, the teacher noted in the Childswickham school log book that "The Attendance Officer called during the week and informed me that the father of Dorothy Stanford had again been fined for not sending his child regularly to school". The 'again' indicates that the family seem to have taken little notice.(29) Girls who came from very large families and whose mothers suffered ill health were frequently kept out of school to help at home.

I had ten brothers and two sisters... My eldest sister had left home, she worked at Buckland Manor, helped in the kitchen. I used to have to do the work, get the meals when they came home. I didn't do much schooling. We had the attendance officer, and he came and saw my parents because they would keep me away from school. He told them they had to send me back to school, but the doctor was there at the time and he said I had to be off school.(30)

Mrs. AE's eldest daughter passed her scholarship for the grammar school.

She didn't go because I'd just come out of hospital after this big operation, and my husband thought we'd be glad of her at home. And they had to go up Aston Hill to get to Campden. There were no buses - we had to cycle, didn't we? So she didn't go. (Was she disappointed?) Yes she was.(31)

Mrs. BB was proud of her certificate from the Daily Sketch "Britain's Best Scholars Competition, dated June 1913. She left school at 13,

Because my mother was ill I left school earlier than I should have done. I should have gone on to 14 if she'd been all right. Well, I didn't mind going to school. I've got a picture in the other room from the Daily Sketch competition.(32)

Mrs. AK, born in 1920, left school at 14 to look after her grandfather.

When my grandfather became too ill to work on his land, mum used to work his land and I stayed home to look after him and did the cooking. That was my first job when I left school..It was taken for granted that I would do the same thing as mother did. I don't think there was really anything else. Although my sister wasn't much younger than me and she went into the telephone exchange. But you see you had to have a grammar school education in those days to get there, and I didn't. She did and Vin did you see. And this is why mother always worked, to keep them at school.(33)

Mothers were reported as having inordinate influence on the age at which their children left school. This rural finding is backed up by an urban study. In Education and the Working Class, Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden interviewed a sample of eighty-eight adults from working class backgrounds who had passed through the grammar schools of Huddersfield since the Education Act of 1944. They found that the academically successful children "came mostly from the more prosperous upper levels of the working class and that, further, they come from small families within this group" though they are careful to point out that neither explanation is exhaustive.(34) Whereas in their interviews with middle-class parents the father

appears as the dominant parent in matters of education, in the working class, "it is clear that the centres of power usually lay with the mother ... Its roots seemed to push much deeper into the basic rhythms and expectations of working-class life, belonging to that whole pattern of social life in which the mother rather than the father was the organic centre".(35)

It is interesting to analyse how the above criteria apply to those families in the rural study where the children continued in school after the usual age of 14. Six girls who were interviewed went on to grammar school, three went into teaching (one straight from the village school as a pupil teacher). The three girls who became teachers were from middle-class teaching and farming families. They were included in the study because their views on education and employment opportunities were sought. Their fathers were the dominant influence in their choice of education. Teaching, like most occupations, often ran in families. All three went into infant teaching (which had a shorter training, was lower paid and was dominated by women) rather than secondary education.

Miss BE, born in 1901, one of eight children, attended Bricklehampton village school until 16 and then became a pupil teacher there. Her father was a farmer with his own farm, but her father's people were teachers.

I'd always wanted to teach. In those days you didn't go to college. You did your exams at evening classes and you

were accepted into the teaching profession through that. And then if the time came afterwards then you could take a 12-month course, which I did later, and came out fully qualified. You were accepted as a teacher at the age of 18, if you'd got your exams and everything and were willing to go on and do a bit more. And I taught at Bricklehampton in the village school.(36)

Miss BP, born in 1915, was one of two children. Her father was a headmaster at Dursley and later Badsey village school. Judging by the school scholarship results he must have been a very successful teacher. Her mother trained as a milliner and ran her father's pram shop before she married. Miss BP trained at St. Mary's College, Cheltenham.

We went to Prince Henry's Grammar School in Evesham. It was 50 girls and boys. We used to take the scholarship to get in. I don't know what the proportion of scholarship people were to paying people. I remember the fee payers standing in line. We were looked down upon rather. Well, they used to say, "scholarship people" with a bit of scorn, you know. Well, of course, it ought to have been the other way around because we had the brains to get there, but we couldn't say that when they were paying. I remember at Badsey School we used to get about eight or ten scholarship people out of forty.

I was 17 and three quarters when I left school, because I had my eighteenth birthday in college. It (teaching) was in the family - my father and uncles and aunties on either side - so we just went in for it. I was very glad I did in the end. I know one aunty I had was a sister, a nursing sister, in a nursing home, and they wanted me to go there and be a nurse, but I knew I couldn't do that so I just went into teaching, sort of ... I was the youngest of my year. I did infant teaching. We were separated then into infants, juniors and seniors...

(Did most women specialise in infant teaching?) Yes mostly infant and junior, and the men did the seniors. Of course, you only did a two-year course in those days. Then we had a year probation after and they kept coming round to check that you were doing it properly.(37)

Mrs. AI was born in 1906. Her father was a tenant farmer. His first wife had died and she was from his second marriage. He had six children from his first marriage and five from his second. Her father was a keen reader.

I went on at grammar school until I was 18. I took School Certificate and then Matric. (Was it easy to get into training college?) Yes I only applied to one, Goldsmith's College in London. That was where my elder sister (trained) and she was very anxious I go there. (And your father and mother encouraged you?) No, mother didn't. Well she did in the end, but she was disappointed that I wasn't home helping.(38)

Mrs. AI took a two-year training course. Her husband took a degree course.

The other three girls who went on to grammar school seem to have come from enterprising families who, when times were good, bordered on the middle class. It was their fathers, whose own educational ambitions had been thwarted, who encouraged them, rather than their mothers.

Mrs. AP, born in 1917, was one of four children. Her mother died when she was small and she was raised by her aunt, who later became her stepmother. Her father was a market gardener in Badsey. Her grandfather had worked in America towards the end of the 19th century, saved and bought a house and land when he returned and married.

My father just took it for granted that the boys would go on the land, but he didn't want me to. Well, I always wanted to be a teacher. I ended up one but I didn't do it then. I don't know. All I can think of was that I hated Latin - and didn't we have to do Latin to go into training

college? The alternative to Latin was business studies which we did and bookkeeping, and that sort of prepared me (for a job in a bank in Evesham). But I was always rather sorry I didn't do teaching.

(Did your father encourage you?) Yes, he was a great reader. He was one that should have gone on, but his father died - he was 46 - and left my grandmother with a family of ten. My father and brothers had to work. Three of them went to work. There was no welfare, there was only the parish relief.(39)

Mrs. AP left grammar school and worked in a bank in Evesham.

Mrs. AF, born in 1913, was the eldest of a family of eight. Her father was a market gardener with his own land. His death put paid to her ambitions of a university education.

I went to the grammar school when I was 11 and I stayed till I was 17 and then I was going into teaching, and I had a prize for being the best pupil in the school and first class honours and I was matric and all the rest of it. My father was very keen on education. Now he wanted to go on and be a teacher, he was never interested in market gardening, but his father you know .. and he was very well read, he'd educated himself, and he was determined that we should have good educations.

So the headmaster, he persuaded them I should go to university, and I was going to stay on. And I thought, "Well, I don't know whether they can afford it." Because in those days you didn't get grants or loans, and there was nothing extra, not for girls especially.

Anyway, my father died suddenly. He had appendicitis .. and he was only 40, and my youngest sister was six weeks old. And you see having been self-employed, there was nothing like a pension or anything like that. I was still at school, but some of the others hadn't even started school .. Well, anyway I knew when my father died that I'd got to forget about university.(40)

Mrs. AB, born in Blockley in 1909, attended Campden Grammar School as a fee-payer. She was an only child. She left at 17 to help with the family business. Her mother ran a small shop,

her father farmed and hired out hackney carriages. The family inherited their home and shop from her grandfather, a baker.

I don't think I had any option. You don't have options in these things, do you? If the family need you, you stay at home. I don't think I had any choice at all. Like farmers, you know, you dig in and you get on with it. You're not asked what you want to do. The family need you so you get on with it.. I helped generally.(41)

The majority of the boys, like the girls, did not go on to grammar school but left school at 13 or 14. Their labour and income was needed to help support the family. Mr. BF was the only respondent who was encouraged to go on to grammar school by his mother. She was an ambitious, hardworking Scot who had her own dress-making business. His father was a rather feckless carter and contract labourer. Ironically he was the only respondent who directed thwarted his mother's wishes. His mother was a keen reader and valued education. She wanted her younger son to go to grammar school rather than follow his elder brother into butchering.

I went to the council school along Willersey Road here until I was 14. Well, I finished up the top of the school more or less and it had all been laid on I was going to the grammar school. And I turned on mother and I said I just wouldn't go. I donno ... (So your mother was trying to influence you?) Yes, oh yes. It was enough to have one son in the family butchering. Dirty, filthy trade - you know! And all this business - you can better yourself! I just didn't want to know. I was very happy in my work.(42)

Most boys had to leave school as early as possible. Mr. BQ, born in 1905, started school in Fladbury at four and left at 11 to work on his father's market garden.

I was 11 when I was taken away from school. I wasn't 'taken away', but I left school to work on the land and I never went back any more.(43)

Mr. Hodge, born in 1914, left school at 14. Struggling to write his memoirs for a talk to the Snowhill Women's Club, he regretted his lack of schooling, but acknowledges there was no alternative:

There were five teachers at Broadway. Headmaster, deputy master, and three female teachers. I think that if I had had a bit longer there, I would probably have made a better job of this writing, but having just got settled in, it was time for me to leave.(44)

His brother wanted to be a schoolmaster. He won prizes for his essays at school and passed the scholarship for grammar school, but the family could not afford to send him.

Mr. Maurice Andrews, one of 12 children of a farm labourer, wrote,

At the age of fourteen years and with the Second War still two years off, I left the village school to work full-time. My headmaster, "Bridgie" had tried hard to get me to go on to the Grammar School in Evesham. "You know he should go, Mrs. Andrews", he had said, when he called at home to see what I was going to do. "Yes, Mr. Bridgmen, I do see that", replied Mother, "but none of the others went so I think it best if he doesn't either." That was that. Out to work I went.(45)

Children's wages were a welcome addition to the family budget. Mr. BF received five shillings a week when he first started in the butcher's trade in 1928. He handed this over to his mother who gave him a shilling a week pocket money.(46) Mr. AJ earned twelve shillings a week in 1931. His mother let him have 2/6d. "I was supposed to clothe myself with it".(47)

Mr. AC, one of seven children, left school in 1911. His family was so anxious to have the help of his income that he did not wait until the end of term. His mother helped in the kitchen at "the big house" and two sisters worked there as servants.

I left school on me birthday, the 24th October. I was 13, just 13. I went to work the next Monday and I had 3/6d a week. In the gardens - Middle Hill. Flowers, the Brewery people. An old lady Mrs. Flowers were. (What was your work?) Lawn mowing and round the house.(48)

Mr. AL left school at 14 in 1927 to work on a farm.

I left school on the Thursday before Good Friday and I had to start work on the Saturday - up and down that hill with five horses and a stone wagon (clearing stones). (What were you paid?) Nine shillings a week. I used to give her (his mother) it all and I had 6d. pocket money. She was glad of it.(49)

The oral evidence points to the fact that parental poverty was the dominant factor in the early termination of education. As in the 19th century this remained the chief cause of parental "indifference" to their children's educational opportunities. Ivy Pinchbeck's observation on attitudes towards education in the countryside in the nineteenth century was also relevant in the early twentieth: "a small wage in the immediate future was of more importance than a prospective gain from education".(50) In rural working class families mothers played a pivotal role in determining when their children left school. School teachers were often quoted as encouraging a talented child, but it was the mother who knew whether the family economy could support a scholarship child through grammar school or whether that child's earnings or labour was crucial

to the family budget. Four girls had to leave school to look after sick or elderly kin. In two cases girls' education was sacrificed for that of their brothers. In general, however, boys as well as girls left school at 13 or 14 to earn their keep and help support their families.

Footnotes to Chapter 3(a) The Home

1. Robert Hodge unpublished autobiography, p. 3.
2. Harold Andrews unpublished autobiography, p. 26.
3. Mr. AD.
4. Mrs. AK.
5. Mrs. AS.
6. Mrs. BR.
7. P. Thompson, The Edwardians, (1977), p. 60.
8. Mrs. AF.
9. Mrs. AG.
10. Mr. BF.
11. Mr. AJ.
12. Mr. AJ.
13. Mrs. BR.
14. Mrs. AS.
15. Mrs. AK.
16. Mrs. AS.
17. Mrs. BO.
18. Mrs. BR.
19. Mr. BF.

20. Mrs. BR.
21. Mr. AD.
22. Mr. AO.
23. Mr. BF.
24. Mrs. AI.
25. Harold Andrews unpublished autobiography, p. 23.
26. Mr. AJ.
27. Mr. AC.
28. John Benson. The Penny Capitalists, (1983).
29. Robert Hodge unpublished autobiography, pp. 28-29.
30. Mr. AO.
31. M. Andrews. A Village Remembered, (Eastbourne 1971) p. 12.
32. Ibid, p. 21.
33. Miss BJ.
34. Mrs. BB.
35. Mrs. AI.
36. Lynn Jamieson, Working Class Mothers and Daughters in Scotland 1890-1925, in (ed.) Jane Lewis. Labour and Love, (1986) p. 51.
37. Miss BE.
38. Mrs. BL.
39. Robert Hodge unpublished autobiography, p. 42.
40. Miss BE.
41. Mr. Harold Andrews unpublished autobiography, p.5.
42. Mrs. BR.
43. Robert Hodge unpublished autobiography, p.13.
44. Ibid, p. 39.

45. Mrs. AB.

Footnotes to Chapter 3(b) The Church

1. Joseph Arch was both a labour leader and a dissenter. His descriptions of the Church of England in Joseph Arch, The Story of his Life, (1898) may therefore be biased, but his criticisms of the church as he remembered it in the 1830s helps to explain why the dissenters' chapel movement spread amongst agricultural workers,

I can remember when the squire and the other local magnates used to sit in state in the centre of the aisle. They did not, if you please, like the look of the agricultural labourers. Hodge sat too near them, and even in his Sunday best he was an offence to their eyes. They also objected to Hodge looking at them so they had curtains put up to hide them from the vulgar gaze. (Arch, The Story of his Life, (1898) p. 19)

He writes that Communion was taken in order of rank, first the squire, then the farmers followed by the tradesmen, the shopkeepers, the wheelwright, and the blacksmith, and lastly the agricultural labourers. (Ibid., p. 20.) The local parson's wife decreed that labourers and their wives should sit separately on each side of the church. (Ibid., p. 17.)

There was no chapel in our village, but when I was about fourteen years of age some dissenters began to come over from Wellsbourne. They used to hold meetings in a back lane. When the parson got wind of it, he and his supporters, the farmers, dared the labourers to go near these unorthodox Christians. If we did, then good-bye to all the charities; no more soup and coals should we have. And it was no idle threat. (ibid., p. 21-22.)

Primitive Methodist, Wesleyan and Baptist chapels were led by the villagers themselves, "rough and ready men were they, dressed in their fustian coats" (Ibid., p. 22.) The period 1828 to 1835 saw the establishment of many chapels and there was a period of rapid growth in the 1860s prior to the onset of trade unionism. They were a threat to the "ostensible unity of the rural parish" one of the prerequisites of social order and deference to traditional authority. (Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 65.) Many of the union leaders, like Arch himself, were voluntary Sunday

preachers whose gospel imparted radicalism as well as religion. It is no wonder that the landowners and Church of England feared the establishment of rival pulpits. The chapels provided a meeting place for labourers to discuss their grievances and it is no coincidence that the National Agricultural Labourers' Union was born in the Primitive Methodist Chapel at Wellsbourne or that their meetings in market towns were often called in the Temperance Union. The radical message was clothed in the language of the Old Testament. Referring to the agricultural labourers Arch stated,

These white slaves of England stood there with the darkness all about them, like the Children of Israel waiting for some one to lead them out of the land of Egypt. (Arch. The Story of his Life, (1898) p. 73.)

2. Arch comments on the position of women.

The parson's wife used to sit in state in her pew in the chancel. and the poor women used to walk up the church and make a curtsy to her before taking the seats set apart for them. They were taught in this way they had to pay homage and respect to those "put in authority over them," and made to understand that they must "honour the powers that be," as represented in the rector's wife. You may be pretty certain that many of these women did not relish the curtsy- scraping and other humiliations they had to put up with. but they were afraid to speak out. They had their families to think of. children to feed and clothe somehow: and when so many could not earn a living wage. but only a half-starving one. when very often a labouring man was out of work for weeks at a stretch - why. the wives and mothers learned to take thankfully whatever was doled out to them at the parsonage or elsewhere. and drop the curtsy expected of them, without making a wry face. (Ibid., p. 17-18.)

3. Labourers' Friend Society, Useful Hints for Labourers, (1840), p. 53.
4. Ibid.
5. Arch. Joseph Arch. (1898) p. 20.
6. Maurice Andrews. A Village Remembered, (Eastbourne 1971) p. 40.

7. Harold Andrews. unpublished autobiography, p. 2.
8. Mrs. BR.
9. Mrs. AB.
10. Miss BI.
11. Mr. BF.
12. Mrs. BK.
13. Mrs. BK.
14. Mrs. AF and Miss BE.
15. Mrs. AS.
16. Miss BJ.
17. Mrs. AG.
18. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire County Records Office.
19. Mrs. BR.
20. Mrs. AS.
21. Mrs. AS.
22. Mrs. BL.
23. Mrs. AM.
24. Maurice Andrews. A Village Remembered, (Eastbourne 1971) p. 40.
25. Miss AQ.
26. Miss Connie Burrows. unpublished autobiography. p. 1.
27. Mr. AL

Footnotes to Chapter 3(c). Class

1. Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 46.
2. Ibid., p. 47.
3. Ibid., p. 48.

4. The vast social chasm between classes is demonstrated when the election of the first representatives of the farm workers necessitated social contact on a more equitable and less deferential basis. After the 1906 election the humanitarian Countess of Warwick's support of workers' candidates elicited the shocked reaction of Queen Alexandra who wrote sarcastically,

And what do you think of that charming Lady Warwick mounting a waggon at the corner of the street and addressing her "comrades", the scum of the labourers, and then taking off her glove to shake and feel their horny hands! (Anita Leslie, Edwardians in Love, (1972) p. 184.)

When the agricultural labourer and campaigner Joseph Arch won his parliamentary seat in 1892, he reported a similar reaction to his handshake,

I then went up to the High Sheriff, held out my hand and thanked him for the very able way in which he had conducted the count. He shook hands with me, then deliberately pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his hand. (Joseph Arch, Joseph Arch, The Story of his Life, (1898) p. 387.)

5. Gibbs's A Cotswold Village, published in 1914, typifies the condescending attitude of the middle classes towards the agricultural labourer:

It is inevitable that men engaged day by day and year by year in such monotonous employ as agricultural labour should be somewhat lacking in acuteness and sensibility; in no class is the hereditary influence so marked. Were it otherwise, matters would be in a sorry pass in country places, for discontent would reign supreme; and once let "ambition mock their useful toil," once their sober wishes learn to stray, how would the necessary drudgery of agricultural work be accomplished at all? In spite, however, of this marked characteristic of inertness - hereditary in the first place, and fostered by the humdrum round of daily toil on the farm - there is sometimes to be found a sense of humour and a love of merriment that is quite astonishing. (Gibbs, A Cotswold Village, (1914) p. 24.)

His remedy for the workers' discontent is increased paternalism on the part of the land-owners, and less absenteeism from their estates.

It is a sad thing when the "big house" of the village is empty. The labourers who never see their squire begin to look upon him as a sort of ogre, who exists merely to screw rents out of the land they till.

To be sure, the good ladies at the "great house" are invariably "ministering angels" to the poor in times of sickness, but even in these democratic days there is too great a gulf fixed between all classes. Let all those who are fortunate enough to live in such a place as we have attempted to describe remember that a kind word, a shake of the hand, the occasional distribution of game throughout the village, and a hundred other small kindnesses do more to win the heart of the labouring man than much talk at election times of Small Holdings, Parish Councils, or Free Education.

A tea given two or three times a year by the squire to the whole village, when the grounds are thrown open to them, does much to lighten the dullness of their existence and to cheer the monotonous round of daily toil..

Alas! that there should exist in so many country places that class feeling that is called Radicalism. It is perhaps fortunate that under the guise of politics what is really nothing else but bitterness and discontent is hidden and prevented from being recognised by its true name. (*Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.)

6. Miss Connie Burrows, unpublished autobiography, p.2.
7. Mrs. AS
8. Mr. BF.
9. Mrs. AK.
10. Mrs. BO.
11. Mr. AO.
12. Miss BI.

13. Mr. BF.
14. Mr. BF.
15. Mrs. AG.
16. Newby, Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 49.
17. Mr. AD.

Footnotes to Chapter 3(d), School.

1. Blunden. in The Sexual Dynamics of History, (1983) p. 93.
2. Dyhouse. Girls Growing Up, (1981) p. 81.
3. Full-time school attendance was made compulsory in 1880 for children up to 10 (11 from 1893 and 12 from 1899). If a specified level of attainment, usually standard IV or V, had not been attained pupils in theory should continue their education at least on a part-time basis. Free schooling was introduced in 1891. (A. Armstrong. Farmworkers, (1988) p. 124.)
4. Horn, Education in Rural England, (1978) p. 53.
5. Garnier. Annals of the British Peasantry, (1908) p. 412.
6. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire County Records Office.
7. Horn. Education in Rural England, (1978) p. 77.
8. Mrs. BK
9. Childswickham School Log Book. Worcestershire County Records Office.
10. Mrs. AS.
11. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire County Records Office.
12. Mrs. BM.
13. Childswickham School Log Book.
14. Broadway School Log Book.

15. Turner, The Story of Childswickham, (1949) p. 43.
16. Mrs. AN.
17. Miss BE.
18. Horn, Education in Rural England, (1978) p. 273.
19. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office
20. Nesholme and Scott, Domestic Economy (1899) p. 252.
21. Ibid, p. 252.
22. Ibid, p. 257.
23. Ibid, p. 257.
24. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
25. Mrs. AS.
26. Mrs. AK.
27. Lewis, Women in England, (Brighton 1984) p. 36.
28. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, pp. 17-18.
29. Ibid, p. 18.
30. Broadway School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
31. Houghton, A Walk about Broadway, (Shepperton 1980) p. 24.
32. Miss Connie Burrows, unpublished autobiography, p.1.
33. Knight, Cotswold Lad, (1960) p.10.
34. Mrs. BK.
35. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p.18.
36. Ibid, p 18.
37. Houghton, A Walk about Broadway, (Shepperton 1980) p.25.
38. Broadway School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
39. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.

40. Mrs. AG.
41. Mrs. BN.
42. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p.19.
43. Broadway School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
44. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
45. Ibid.
46. Evesham Union Workhouse Records, Worcestershire Records Office.
47. Horn, Education in Rural England, (1978) p.271.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

Footnotes to Chapter 3(e) Leaving School

1. R. C. Gaut, The History of Worcestershire Agriculture, (Worcester 1939) p. 324.
2. Ibid.
3. Ward, Seasons of Change, (1982) p. 155.
4. Mason, Snowhill, (Cheltenham 1987) p. 36.
5. Horn, Education in Rural England, (1978) p. 269.
6. Bennett, Problems of Village Life. (1913) p. 97.
7. Joseph Arch, the chief of the agitators, was in agreement that education - or lack of it - had been the means by which the rural poor were kept in their place.

"Much knowledge of the right sort is a dangerous thing for the poor," might have been the motto put up over the door of the village school in my day. The less book-learning the labourer's lad got stuffed into him, the better for him and the safer for those above him, was what those in authority believed and acted up to. I daresay they made themselves think somehow or other -

perhaps by not thinking - that they were doing their duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call them, when they tried to numb his brain, as a preliminary to stunting his body later on, as stunt it they did, by forcing him to work like a beast of burden for a pittance.

These gentry did not want him to know; they did not want him to think; they only wanted him to work. To toil with the hand was what he was born into the world for, and they took precious good care to see that he did it from his youth upwards. Of course he might learn his catechism; that, and things similar to it, was the right, proper, and suitable knowledge for such as he; he would be the more likely to stay contentedly in his place to the end of his working days. (Joseph Arch, Joseph Arch, The Story of his Life, (1898) p. 25.)

8. Turner, The Story of Childswickham, (1949) p. 43.
9. Ibid.
10. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 98.
11. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
12. Ibid.
13. Mrs. AK.
14. Cadbury, Women's Work and Wages, (reprint of 1906 ed. 1980) p. 110.
15. Bourne and MacArthur, The Struggle for Education 1870-1970, (1970) p. 47.
16. A 1911 NUT conference delegate summarised the Union viewpoint:

The old liberal policy ... was to provide an open road with no unbridged moat for every scholar able and willing to continue his education. The policy of some of the permanent officials was the medieval plan which barred the road to the masses, picked up here and there a clever lad of lowly birth, took him out of his order, fitted him with the education of the ruling classes, and made him one of them - a system which

has been described as providing a handful of
prigs and an army of serfs. (quoted from
Education in Rural England. 1800-1914.
(1978) Horn, p. 272.)

17. Mrs. AF.
18. Mrs. AF.
19. Mrs. AS.
20. Miss BI.
21. Mrs. BO.
22. Mrs. BO.
23. Mrs. BR.
24. Miss AQ.
25. Mrs. BK.
26. Mrs. AR.
27. Mrs. BC.
28. Mrs. AG.
29. Childswickham School Log Book, *Worcestershire Records*
Office.
30. Mrs. BL.
31. Mrs. AE.
32. Mrs. BB.
33. Mrs. AK.
34. B. Jackson and D. Marsden. Education and the Working
Class. (1966) p. 67.
35. Ibid. p. 96.
36. Miss BE.
37. Miss BP.
38. Mrs. AI.
39. Mrs. AP.

40. Mrs. AF. Mrs. AF started nursing training but dropped out when she passed the civil service examinations. She worked at the Internal Revenue Office in Evesham. (See Chapter 4b.)
41. Mrs. AB.
42. Mr. BF.
43. Mr. BQ.
44. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 19.
45. Andrews, A Village Remembered, (Eastbourne 1971) p. 21.
46. Mr. BF.
47. Mr. AJ.
48. Mr. AC.
49. Mr. AL.
50. Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, (1969) p. 107.

CHAPTER 4 - YOUTH AND WORK
(a) DOMESTIC SERVICE

In this chapter oral evidence is examined to determine whether Jane Lewis's statement that domestic service and field work remained the only two options open to the majority of rural women until after World War II was true (1)

Apart from for the few who went on to grammar school, respondents reported that there was little career planning for village school-leavers of either sex. Most girls, like the boys, took whatever job was available when they left school. One respondent stated that her two younger aunts

Did a bit of gloving, not a lot there wasn't so much then, but they also worked on the land or as kitchen maids, or anything like that they'd do. They'd do anything, anything that was going.(2)

Oral evidence confirmed that domestic service was the only occupation available for most girls leaving school beside field-work or gloving (though gloving was mainly the occupation of married women (see chapter 6c) or - for the lucky ones - shop work.

Because domestic servants "lived in", it relieved their families of housing and feeding their girls after the age of 14. Many respondents from large families commented that the children were never all home at one time because the elder girls were already away in service when the younger children

came along. As Lewis observed. "poor mothers were often anxious for their daughters to get their feet under someone else's table as soon as possible".(3) One respondent, born in 1896, commented, "Well, anybody was glad to go really because everyone was so poor."(4)

While domestic service was often stigmatised by urban women who had the choice of alternative employment. for young rural women it was the accepted occupation between leaving school and marriage. Again and again respondents made comments similar to those made by two respondents born in the 1920s: "Well in mum's days and in my young days really in villages to go out to service were the only jobs available";(5) and, "Well there was nothing else you could do".(6)

It was found that girls in service often moved around the country from employer to employer. They changed positions fairly frequently in the search for more congenial employers and better jobs.

Well, I left there before I was married. I went at the Rectory because I wanted to better myself you see. You'd have to leave and take another place to better yourself and get more wages. And I was cook up at the Rectory here (Can you tell me what you were paid?) Well, it was very little. I can't tell you, the honest truth I can't tell you know... 'Cause our keep was part of our wages, you see.(7)

Employers preferred their live-in servants to be single. Most of the respondents eventually married and, therefore, left

full-time service in their twenties. Many, however, continued in paid domestic work on a daily basis after marriage as cleaners, laundry women and kitchen helps (see chapter 6b). Even before the First World War the demand for female servants was beginning to outstrip supply and the use of married part-time domestics was expanding. By 1911 the number of charwomen had advanced between 12 and 13 per cent over the previous decade.(8)

In addition to the carefully maintained social division between the servant class and their employers, in big houses there was a pyramid of responsibility and social position "below stairs". Among the female servants the housekeeper - or in more modest homes, the cook - and the lady's maid were at the summit, followed by the nurse, the housemaids, kitchenmaids, scullery-maids and laundry staff. The most numerous class, the maid-of-all work or general servant was the very bottom of the servant class.(9) The women interviewed who remained in service for a longer period (most married and left in their twenties) ended up as cooks or housekeepers. However, the girls started out either as kitchen maids or as housemaids. The duties set out for the latter by Warnes's household book are onerous. The book warns young servants that should the eye of her employer overlook some omissions, the eye of the Lord is omnipresent:

Do your daily duties "with all your might," remembering Whose eye is always on you: and believe that the Great King

who gives us all our daily work to do. will not leave unmarked the efforts of even a little maid of all work.(10)

Village girls had been apprenticed as a "little maid of all work" in their own homes taking care of younger children, cooking, making beds and helping with the washing, ironing and mending. They had learned their domestic skills from an early age, first from their mothers and later from school. They were used to hard work and had been trained not to question orders and to be obedient and deferential to their social superiors. Most mothers had been in service themselves and they were influential in getting jobs for their daughters. The kin and village network was frequently consulted to find out where there were vacancies. Some village women ran informal employment agencies.

There was a lady, you went to her for jobs, and these people approached her. Anyway, she was quite friendly with my mother - they'd been friends as young girls - and she was very helpful.(11)

One mother, born in London, had come to Broadway when she was in service. She was in a good position to secure jobs for her daughters in London.

As soon as they were fourteen mother would get the London papers and she knew the various houses where they needed these servants. 'Course her mother was up there as well.(12)

Girls moved around the country not only in search of better jobs but with their "families". Mrs. BG was born in 1896 in a little village outside Hereford. All the girls in the family

went into service. She moved with her employers from Droitwich to Broadway.

I lived in one or two places in Herefordshire. Lower Pritchard I started at and learned it all. I was scullery maid, and then I went into the housemaiding. Well, we went first in the kitchen to see if you liked it, and housemaiding to see if you liked that. And I liked the housemaiding work better. Well, you had to do all the bedrooms, you know, and wait on 'em - of course water wasn't laid on then. And we had to light fires because they wasn't all so modern as they are today. And it was a great big house..And there was a butler used to wait on them and a lady's maid. Seven or eight of us. (Can you remember how much you were paid?) Not much it wasn't, no. We were only paid about once in about three months. But when we went out they let you have - the chauffeur would come and take us to town shopping and what not. It was a beautiful house. All that oak panelling and the stairs was beautiful. We used to polish the floors and the banisters.. (Who supervised your work?) One of the Miss Hingleys used to come round and look to see if it was all right. But they were very nice the ladies. There were three in the kitchen beside the housekeeper, there was the cook, the kitchen maid and scullery maid. Then there was the butler and the footman. I was one of the housemaids and we were polishing. It were a great big house to keep nice. It were all polished floors.(13)

To work for such a large establishment conferred status and girls often basked in the reflected glory of their employers. Mrs. BG was proud of her "ladies who were leaders of the WI (see chapter 7b).

They were from Kidderminster, that part of the world. Foundries and things, that s where their money came from. Their brother was Sir George Hingley.(14)

The family in turn were benevolently paternalistic. When Mrs. BG informed them that she was to marry, they found out all about him to make sure he was good and honest and respectable."(15) When anyone in the family was tired of their clothes they gave them to the ladies maid to see if it was

good for anybody".(16) Because of her intimate connection with the mistress of the house, the lady's maid held a high place in the female domestics' social pyramid and was accorded the title "Miss" by the other servants. They were only found in the homes of the very wealthy. As Mrs. BG's daughter recalls.

The lady's maid used to think she was it, didn't she. I well remember her. 'cause when I was a child you used to go up to Middle Hill, didn't you. Because they were still friends with the chauffeur and his wife, you see. And we used to go up there visiting. I can remember being took to see Miss Lucy. It was just like going to see old Queen Mary. They always bought me something for Christmas. I've got books and things Miss Lucy gave me.(17)

Miss BJ, born 1913, also worked in a very big house.

I went to Wormington Grange first. Lady Ismay's mother - Lord Ismay who worked during the war with Churchill. The present lady who lives there is the granddaughter of the lady who I worked for. I was scullery maid. There were twelve in service. Started at six o'clock in the morning by taking the cook's tea. Then I had two long passages to scrub, lay the servants' hall, the fire, and sweep the dust in the servants hall, carry the servants' breakfast in by 8 o'clock. The kitchen maid was responsible for that. And then after breakfast I washed up. Then I made the kitchen maid's and my bed - we shared a room. Then I did the scullery floor, all the vegetables for the dining room, the nursery, the servants' hall. The servants' hall lunch was at ten past twelve...

I had to get the cook's lunch from the side table in the kitchen and take it to what was known as the pug's parlour. The heads - the cook-housekeeper, the butler, the lady's maid and the head nursery-maid, they didn't eat in the servants' hall...

Then, having done all the kitchen washing up, the rest of the afternoon I had to clean all these copper saucepans, salt and vinegar outside and whitening inside. Then there was all the plucking and skinning - pheasant plucking, hare skinning, partridge plucking. (Can you remember what you were paid?) Seven shillings a month, and then at Christmas we were given material to make uniform dresses. A dressmaker down in the village made them.(18)

Even towards the end of the period studied there was little alternative to domestic work for girls leaving school. Food processing factories were starting up in Evesham during the 1930s, but one respondent, who went into service, mentioned how few factories there were when she left school in 1934:

And those that were (there) were more or less a little close-knit community. You got in there because you knew somebody that was in there kind of thing, more so than anything else.(19)

Many girls suffered from terrible homesickness when they were forced to leave home at 13 and 14:

Well I went to Birmingham first. Didn't stay there very long. I was homesick. (What did you begin as?) Kitchen maid. Scrubbing, and vegetables, cooking. First dinner I cooked was for fourteen. (And how much did you get paid?) 15 shillings a month. (How much spare time did you have?) About two hours a day and half a day a week. one Sunday afternoon. You had two o'clock till ten o'clock. You had to be in at ten o'clock at night.(20)

After Birmingham she found work as kitchen maid in Broadway where she could come home on her afternoon off.

I came home when I lived at Broadway. I used to leave at five to ten (downhill by bike) and used to land up just at ten o'clock... But that wasn't a big house, not like Spring Hill and Buckland Manor and that. They used to have 14 in the kitchen there, didn't they, at Buckland. (And how many were there in your kitchen?) Only the three, the cook, a kitchen maid, and a scullery maid. (There were a lot of big houses in Broadway) But some of 'em, they used to treat the girls anyhow. Well you were slaves then. Somebody worked at Austin House .. and they had so much weighed out each day for food.(21)

Despite the harsh conditions, many who started service before the First World War felt pride in recalling their work.

Soon as we were 13 we were out at work, in service. And it was good training. You learnt your manners, and you were in with good people. Would do some of them good today.(22)

However, the interviews bear out the findings of Jane Lewis that "more explicit or implicit criticisms of the paternalistic and deferential relations which characterised the job were forthcoming during the inter-war years".(23) Some girls reported moving out of the private domestic market and into the catering market which began to grow with the increasing tourist trade. One respondent's first experience of domestic service in the 1930s only lasted a week. She objected to her employer who thought she was "the cat's whiskers". She and her sister preferred working in the tea-room at the Sandy's Arms, which was run by the former cook at the manor. She later went back into domestic service until the Second World war but her critical attitude remained. After a short time working for the daughter of the family from the manor house, she went to Upper Snodsbury.

I worked for two old dears like; the one was a spinster and the other was a widow. And I just sort of looked after them you know. General housekeeping sort of thing. I lived in. Used to come home *about once a fortnight*. I got my food and everything, but I've got the feeling that I got about £2.2.6d a month...

Mind you she had a face - I suppose she was all right, I mean I stuck it for five years, so she couldn't have been so bad, though we had lots of ups and downs. But when you saw her face, the eldest of the two sisters, she really put you off! You know, she was one of those real battle-axes. And when they said about salary, and I said, "Oh about 15/- a week", she nearly ate me. And I don't think I ever did have 15/- a week though I worked there for nearly five years. Well, I went there when I was 16 and I was 20 when I left.(24)

For an ambitious girl a career in service could lead to a responsible and demanding job. Two of the respondents who remained in service for a longer period than most girls graduated from scullery maid to cook. The cook, together with the housekeeper and butler, was responsible for the supervision and training of the young servants. The cook controlled the kitchen servants, if there was a housekeeper she controlled the housemaids. Like the housekeeper the cook was given the honorary title of "Mrs." by the other servants as a mark of respect. The hierarchy established within the servant ranks of such large houses as Court Farm, Broadway, was often more striking for young housemaids and scullery maids than the condescension of their employers, whom they rarely saw.(25)

Mrs. AK started as a kitchen maid in a big house in Broadway.

There was only one thing that bothered me - I'll never forget - they had a butler there and he was a very stern man. There was a lot of staff. I was afraid when we had our meals to ask to have the sugar passed, so I didn't take sugar - and I've never taken it since. There was a butler, a cook, two housemaids, a parlourmaid, and a lady's maid, sometimes there was an in-between maid. That was a person who helped either in the kitchen or in the house, wherever she was wanted.(26)

She was eager to learn:

There were old cooks there and they used to start working in the kitchen and then they had great big rooms with slabs all the way around; cold rooms they were, and they'd finish whatever they were doing in there so that you didn't see what they were doing. And I watched and watched as long as possible. They didn't seem to stay very long, and very often foreign ones. Anyway, a young cook came there. Cambridge I think was her home. And she didn't like cooking. I don't know why she'd ever taken up the job. And she used to peel the potatoes and things for me if I'd do some of her cooking. That's how I learnt really. Then she left there and she came down to the manor at

Bretforton, and asked me if I'd like to go as her kitchen maid. So I did. Again, she didn't like cooking and I'd help. This is how come then I had the confidence to apply for a cook-housekeeper's job.(27)

Mrs. AK's mother had graduated from kitchen maid to undercook and finally cook-housekeeper when she was in service. Her mother's experience and connections helped her obtain the prestigious job of cook to Lady Victoria Forrester at the early age of 18 after four years as kitchen maid. One of her mother's friends ran an employment agency in Broadway.

And she was very helpful. If it hadn't been for her I don't think Lady Forrester would have approached me. Wouldn't even have considered someone of my age I suppose. She kept the employment agency as such in Broadway. She always called my mother Kate, and I had to be all right because I was her daughter.

It was a risk for her and it was a risk for me. I really was interested in it. And I was 18 to them from the day I went there until I left to go into the WRENS.(28)

Lady Forrester sent her young cook to a Miss Nathan to learn the finer touches.

One was aspic jelly, another thing was a fatless sponge. You did it over hot water and you beat it and beat it, and today it doesn't take you a few minutes really. Oh and homemade icecream. The real icecream with cream. You did it with fresh eggs and real cream, and, if I remember it rightly the mixture was half and half. Half a pint of egg custard, half a pint of fresh cream and then whatever fruit you like to put in with it. Did it by hand, whipped and whipped and whipped. That was what made all those sort of things such hard work. You had a hand whip maybe, but nothing else.(29)

The wages were five shillings a week when Mrs. AK started at nearly eighteen in 1938. but as cook there were perks.

You lived in and there were a lot of little perks. For instance, a lot of the shopping the other cooks had had from the little village store in Laverton. And they used

to give stamps in those days. If you used to spend so much you had a stamp on a card. I collected quite a bit of money that way. And another thing was trades people used to give you at Christmas time boxes of chocolates. My Christmas presents really were bought with the boxes of chocolates I had given me by the trades people. Maurices were the fish people in Evesham. and they always gave me chocolates. Robinsons, was that the butchers there? Anyway, he used to send the meat out by bicycle with one of those baskets on. Always I had chocolates off him. (It was a responsible job to pick the meat.) It wasn't only that. You paid the bill. I mean the cheques are written for you, of course, they are. You'd got to present your bills and that, but you had the paying of them. I did everything - the jam and the marmalade, and the bottling, it was in those days.

We used to start work at six in the morning and, of course, you didn't work all through the day. There were hours in the afternoon when you didn't work, but we worked until eight or nine at night, depending on how many people there were for dinner. (You not only had to cook for the family, but for the staff as well?) Oh yes, you did. The same kind of meals, but often it was what was left. The joints were big and all this kind of thing. You didn't have a load of courses, but you had meat and a sweet you see - or fish or meat...

Well, I didn't have any cleaning or washing up to do, although I had to organise my day...I had a kitchen maid under me, and there was an in-between maid. She was there to help me or help the parlour maid. The place she was needed in most, depending on what work there was that particular day. And we always had cleaning ladies, they didn't have to do all the cleaning. (And how about days off?) You had Sunday afternoon and evening off. But you worked very long hours. You left Sunday lunch ready. And you see it wasn't just cooking lunch time or evening, it was both. There was a cooked meal twice a day and a cooked breakfast. And it wasn't one thing. You did different things. And my menus had to go forward every morning and Lady Forrester used to come to the kitchen and look at my menus for the day and tell me if there were going to be guests or how many would be in for lunch, how many in for dinner. There were usually more than those two because their family was all around and their friends. (Often) ten or more, yes. They had big dining rooms and plenty of seating, the leaves used to go in. But all I did was the cooking. I had nothing to do with anything else.

The butler arranged the drinks and everything and he was responsible for setting the table and the silver ..She had

a lady's maid also. She had somebody to keep her clothes mended and done. We were in a different wing of the house, but we all had our own bedrooms..The wing was joined onto the house and you could go straight through from it, but you were self-contained. You needn't ever see them, only to do your particular job.

(It must have been a big job.) It was but I loved every minute of it. And when I married I went back. I wouldn't have left (and joined up in the WRENS) but I was so afraid they'd put me into a munitions factory when the war started.(30)

Mrs. BJ, born in 1913, also graduated to cook. She climbed the ladder from scullery maid, to kitchen maid. She learnt from the cook, and started as a temporary cook for the summer for an American family at Top Farm, Broadway. (The family of a Mr. Wells, a poor emigrant from England who made his fortune by inventing Quaker Oats. He died in 1910, but his family continued to come to England every year until World War II.)(31) After temporary work, she went to Russell House, Broadway, and finally to Buckland Manor where she stayed 23 years until, after nine months as cook in America, she had to return to Broadway to look after her father.(32)

For a servant to reach the pinnacle of her aspirations and end as a cook brought added pressure as well as prestige. Pamela Horn notes that "in the hot, badly ventilated atmosphere of the kitchen both the cook and her assistants had to work extremely hard."(33) Sid Knight writes of the harsh reality behind the apparently gracious household of Court Farm in Broadway where the celebrated American actress and socialite

Mary Anderson and her husband Joe de Navarro lived from 1893 to 1940.

But as I grew older I saw another side to all this grandeur. I became acquainted with the hardworking stage-hands of the backdoor, the scene shifters, electricians, cleaners, carpenters, and wardrobe mistress without whom the illustrious exponents of gracious living could not stage their magnificent entrances and exits. When I delivered the Birmingham Post every morning after fighting my way up through the wind and the rain there was Rose Coxhill, the hard-pressed cook, her face burnt by ten thousand kitchen fires, standing over the huge cooking range roaring away like the stokehold of a coal-burning destroyer chasing a submarine. The range was covered with pots, pans and porringers, the plate rack overhead was stacked with plates to warm them so that no chop, kidney, steak, joint, sausage, or cutlet should catch a chill in transit from kitchen stove to the far-off breakfast room, facing east to catch the morning sun. On the well-scrubbed table stood the gleaming coffee-pot, toast racks, and silver dishes waiting to be filled. The butler, footman, parlourmaids, and housemaids scurried about like frightened rabbits, while the sweating Rose harried them on to greater endeavour. With a house full of guests Rose was fully extended from early morning to late at night. Breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, or dinner - there was no let-up for her. The dishes were many, substantial, and varied, and should anything miscarry then there was the devil's own row.(34)

Throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth century the rise of the middle classes gave rise to a large, dependent service sector. As Pamela Horn noted, the employment of domestic staff was a sign of respectability and an indicator of social status (35) and the number of servants employed "was regarded as a rough guide of the status within the ranks of the socially superior".(36) The census figure for resident female domestic workforce in 1881 was 1,230,406; by 1901 it had risen to 1,330,783 and by 1911 it stood at 1,359,359.(37) It was village women who were the chief suppliers of this domestic

labour. Without them the middle classes would have had to reorganise their whole way of life, as they were increasingly forced to do towards the end of the period studied. Up until the Second World War, domestic service remained the largest employment group for women throughout Britain. followed by employment in the production of textiles and clothing. It was not until the Second World War that the dramatic shift to the clerical and typing sector took place.(38)

By requiring women's work in other areas, the Second World War put a definitive end to "going into service". Mr. AJ, born in 1917, had five younger sisters. They were all in service but, "When the war came they had to go to the factory. They went to Josephs in Stratford".(39)

CHAPTER 4 - YOUTH AND WORK

(b) SHOPWORK, LANDWORK AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT

While it was found that the majority of girls went away into domestic service, the villages did offer some local work opportunities. The job of shop assistant was much prized. "You were considered lucky if you got to work in a shop. To be a shop assistant, that was a very good job." (1) It meant that the girl could live at home and, as opposed to service, her evenings were her own.

Many of the women who reported they had worked in shops were employed in their parents' small family business; others got their jobs through family and connections. Only one woman had served an official apprenticeship as a shop assistant. Mrs. AB's mother served her apprenticeship in drapery goods. She had worked at Hamilton and Bells, the department store in Evesham, before marrying and opening her own shop in Blockley. (2)

Miss BI from Broadway left school at fourteen in 1929. She did not marry and stayed in shop work all her working life,

I went into shopwork. I didn't have to go far. My father's sister married into a family who had the shop which was then the newsagents and the greengrocers, and I went to help them when I left school for a fortnight while somebody was on holiday - and I stayed for ten years! (Do you remember what you were paid?) I wasn't full time at first, but after about 12 months 7/6d. I think. (For a full week?) Yes, from 8 o'clock in the morning until 7 at night. Doing what I can't imagine because there wasn't

much business. Eight till eight on a Saturday, and a half day and a week's holiday. And then they sold up and went abroad - went to Jersey - and then I went to St. Patrick's tea rooms and I stayed there for 20 years. I was in the shop at the cash desk attached to the tea rooms. It was nice there. Broadway was just growing then with all the visitors..And the person there died, and they sold up and changed hands and I moved further up the village to the newsagents and gift shop. I stayed there for 22 years. I didn't move around very much - stick in the mud! .. I just liked shop work. It didn't worry me that I hadn't been to the grammar school in that way. I wore myself out. I stayed until I was 68. I had varicose veins, etc. I stood all my life.(3)

Mrs. BK's father was a baker in Broadway. Her mother ran a tearoom and small tobacco and sweet shop. Her grandparents lived next door. Her grandfather was a shoe-repairer and her grandmother ran a greengrocer's shop in her front room. Mrs. BK left school at 13, but had started helping in the shop when she was about ten. Both her sisters were employed in the shop and the tea room when they left school.

We had two little shops. One side we kept the sweets and confectionery and cigarettes and ice-cream and everything like that - we did a wonderful trade - and then we opened up the tea-rooms, next door like, well it was all our building. We ran the tea room for years. We used to have parties (coach parties) and everything up the back with all boards and trestles laid out...

I worked in the shop, mostly in the shop. I didn't like the tea-room. I was always glad when I was busy in the shop. Sometimes they'd get me to take some of it in, but I didn't like that. (So you wanted to go into the shop?) Yes, that's all I wanted to do, and that's all I ever did do, and I never left there until I was 71. 71 when I left the shop. We didn't sell up until then.(4)

Miss AQ left school to work in her parents' baker's shop. As mentioned in chapter 3e, she had dreamt of becoming a nurse,

but the First World War and the shortage of men to help with the rounds put paid to that.

I was about 13 when I started selling things over the counter. I stopped school when I was thirteen. The war was on. I used to go out with the bread van. I used to go out with the horse delivering. Another girl a bit older than me. we used to go together. We'd start out delivering about 9 o'clock, but my father was up and about early. They made the dough at night... We used to do the housework between. I never had a special job and I never had any special money.(5)

The lack of "special money" - wages - was often a problem for those girls who went into family businesses. Their independence was sharply curtailed by their pocket money being doled out only for special needs.

My mother got a sister who lived in Bristol and I'd go there sometimes for a holiday and my father would put his hand in his pocket and say, "Do you want a bit of money?" But I never had any pocket money. If I wanted a suit or a dress or something they used to stump up.(6)

Mrs. AR left school at 13 and helped in her parent's post office. When they installed a telephone exchange, she became one of the first local telephonists.

I manned it quite a bit because I was very interested in it... (Did you get paid for working in the post office?) Well not a lot. I suppose it helped to keep us you see. My mother used to put so much in the post office savings every month for each of the children, but we didn't get pocket money as they do today.(7)

Mrs. AS's father was a small market gardener. She was embarrassed by her mother's financial problems. (See chapter 5b for a discussion of debt.)

I worked in a grocer's shop in Broadway. It was called J. B. Ball at that time, but it was the International. They bought out a lot of small village shops. It was a big combine. And then one of the staff went round the villages taking orders and then they were delivered by van. I think

that must have been after my aunt gave up the shop (in Childswickham). But she (Mrs. AS's mother) often couldn't pay the bills. She'd run them up and I was terribly embarrassed to be working there, you know. But of course we weren't the only ones, there were so many more.(8)

As Mrs. AS was not working for her own family's shop, she received a wage, but, like most young earners, she contributed most of it to the family coffers.

I couldn't have done landwork. There wouldn't have been enough for me anyway. And I wouldn't have earned any money. It was more important, you see. In fact, what I earned helped to keep Henry (her brother). Henry was six years younger than me.(9)

While many reported that their grandmothers and mothers worked on the land and that there had been a drive to recruit women for landwork in the First World War, it was not as usual between the wars to find young, unmarried women working on the land full-time, except where they helped out in the family market garden. Social commentators were relieved at this development. They had long deplored the "moral" effects of such rough employment for young, unmarried women. Seebohm Rowntree wrote in 1913:

Owing to the introduction of machinery in many parts of England, field work is no longer an industry that can support a girl at home. And in those regions where it amounts to an occupation for half the year, the effect on the morals and character of those engaged in it is far from beneficial. Especially, of course, is this the case when the denizens of the slums of the nearest large town and the women and girls of the village are brought into daily contact, or there is too much rough familiarity between the boys and girls. We do not wish to imply that there is no scope for women's labour in the lighter kinds of field work; but as carried on at present in any large market-gardening region - and nowhere else is it a substantial source of income - it is often more a curse than a blessing.(10)

By 1940 when Mrs. AM left school girls were beginning to find alternatives to market gardening work and service. Transport had improved. Most girls now owned or could borrow a bicycle and bus services connected the villages with Evesham. She recalls, "Dad wanted me to go on the land, and I stood it for six months". She became an apprentice hairdresser.(11) Mrs. BR and her eldest sister Ivy worked on the land during and after the First World War, when men were in short supply, and continued full-time. Her second sister also took up a traditional occupation, gloving.

My eldest sister, Ivy, she worked on the land. She worked for Mr. Simms (a large market gardener) for years. She lived at home until she married, when I was 17. Then she moved to Badsey, but she came back on her bicycle and continued working on the land.(12)

Mrs. BR worked for her father on his market garden.

It was only about *three and a half acres*. *Sprout picking* was quite nice work, but I'll tell you what was back-breaking - strawberry picking. Dad grew all manner of things, peas, beans and runners, sprouts, parsnips, carrots.

My father died when I was 21 and then I worked for me mother. My husband - only we wasn't married then, he was a widower after my sister, he worked for her too. We all had to muck in together and just managed to keep going during the depression. We didn't have a wage. He had about six bob a week for pocket money and I didn't have anything. There wasn't anything - it took everything to keep going.(13)

While some like Mrs. BR and her sister were living symbols of past times, others at the end of the period were portents of the new. Mrs. AB helped not only her mother in her boot shop, but also her father in his carriage hire business. When this

became motorised she learned to drive a car, so that she could chauffeur clients. In 1926 she became the first woman in Blockley to drive a car.

The first in the area actually. There was one woman, a Mrs. Harris. at Stow. They had a garage and I used to meet her and we used to have laughs because in those days the men didn't know so much either about cars. Funny in many ways, because if you got stuck you waited at the side of the road until somebody came along and gave you a hand. Men aren't so gallant now. (Did you drive for your father then?) Oh yes. I worked for my father. We weren't taxis then, only hired cars. It was funny when I started because I started when I was 17 and it was unheard of for girls to drive you see. And people would say, "I won't drive with that slip of a girl" and that sort of thing. Oh yes, a great deal. I'd take no notice, and people accept in the end.

(Your mother never learnt to drive?) No in those days middle-aged women didn't do things like that.(14)

Just as Mrs. AB was a pioneer woman driver, her father was one of the pioneer car owners amongst the ordinary villagers. He bought a car in 1914. By this time car-ownership was beginning to pass down the social scale and with the introduction of inexpensive models such as the Morris Oxford and Model-T Ford some of the tradesmen in rural areas were able to join the land owners and professional people who had pioneered car ownership.(15)

Well, we had a car before the war, at the beginning of the war. It was a Bristol. A little open car and my cousin, George, who always worked with us - drove the horses - he learned to drive. So did my dad. And then the war came and I suppose there wasn't any petrol, so no car.

When I first went to school we went on the horse bus to the station. And before I left school we had a car. A very strange old car. We used to get all sorts of people on it... I started on an old Ford - well not an old Ford, a new Ford - a T-model. You only had two gears .. you had to double your clutch.(16)

Mrs. AF was also a pioneer. An excellent student, she left school at 17 (see chapter 3e). Her grammar school had recommended that she go on to university, though she was uncertain whether her parents could afford it. When her market gardener father died the matter was settled, but her ambitions had been fired.

Well anyway I knew when my father died that I'd got to forget about university. Well some of my friends were sitting the civil service exams so I went and sat that. I thought well that's the next best thing, I'll go in the civil service. Well I passed it but there wasn't a vacancy because I had to fill in on the form where I would like to go. which town, and I didn't really want to go far from home - perhaps Cheltenham or Gloucester, somewhere handy.(17)

She finally heard from the Civil Service after she had started nurse's training in Evesham.

Nurses had a hard time in those days. Their pay wasn't very good. I think it was £20 a year, the pay...And I got this job at the Revenue in Evesham .. and I got as much in a week as I was getting in a month. I think I started at £2 a week, which was a fabulous sum then. (1932) And I stayed there for four years...As I say, you had to pass very stiff exams to get even a junior post. I started off as a writing assistant and then I got promotion to clerical assistant. But I enjoyed it there. There weren't many women in there then. There was one tax officer and two typists. There were two typists and one, Miss Doust, she'd sort of got promotion I suppose and she was a clerical officer. There were various grades.(18)

Having started climbing the career ladder, Mrs. AF came up against the Civil Service marriage bar and had to leave after four years.

If I'd stayed there five years I would have had a gratuity, but we'd been engaged for three years. when I was 20 we got engaged and my husband was four years older than me, and I gave it up and we got married. No they didn't keep any married women on, they had to give up.(19)

Only two other of the women surveyed worked in an office. Both left school during the Second World War when new employment opportunities were opening for women in the area, though for Mrs. AH these opportunities proved short-lived when the men returned from the war.

I wanted to take up art and design; the headmaster tried to persuade dad to let me go to art college, but he wouldn't. He said he *couldn't afford to send me there*. So I learned shorthand and typing. Well, I went to Lloyds Bank first and they had to give the men their jobs back and I had to leave. And that happened again the year after. I went to the Rural District Council offices and the same thing. I had to give my job up because the men were coming back from the forces and they were bound to give them their jobs back you see. That happened to me twice.(20)

One of the grammar school girls worked in a bank. but it was not until the war that she was able to work on the counter.

We were doing the accounts, and then when men were called up in the war we went on the counter. I was the first female to go on the counter in Evesham. I don't think we were paid the same (as the men). (Was it difficult to get a job in a bank?) Yes, that's why I stayed on until I was 18. I could have left when I was 17-1/2. There were some women in the bank - secretaries.(21)

With the exception of those who worked in shops, most girls had to give up their jobs when they married. Even where there was no official marriage bar, as there was in the civil service, teaching and nursing between wars, there was a customary one. Most female domestic servants left service upon marriage, though many continued as "dailies". Women could rarely afford to give up working altogether, but merely changed from full-time to part-time paid labour as they took on family responsibilities (see chapters 6b to 6e).

Footnotes to Chapter 4(a) Domestic Service

1. Lewis. Women in England 1870-1950, (Brighton 1984) p. 157.
2. Mrs. BM.
3. Lewis. Women in England 1870-1950. (Brighton 1984) p. 56.
4. Mrs. BG.
5. Mrs. AK.
6. Mrs. BC.
7. Mrs. AE.
8. Horn. The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant. (Dublin 1925) p. 151.
9. Ibid. p. 47.
10. Warne's Everyday Cookery, ed. Mary Jeeves, London, (1898) p. 348.
11. Mrs. AK.
12. Mrs. BO.
13. Mrs. BG.
14. Mrs. BG.
15. Mrs. BG.
16. Mrs. BG.
17. Mrs. AH.
18. Miss BJ.
19. Mrs. AG.
20. Mrs. BC.
21. Mrs. BC.
22. Mrs. AE.
23. Lewis. Women in England. (Brighton 1984) p. 157.

24. Mrs. AG.
25. Gordon and Brietenbach. The World is Ill Divided.
(Edinburgh 1990) p. 146.
26. Mrs. AK.
27. Mrs. AK.
28. Mrs. AK.
29. Mrs. AK.
30. Mrs. AK.
31. Houghton, A Walk about Broadway, (Shepperton 1980) p.
33.
32. Miss BJ.
33. Horn. The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant.
(Dublin 1925) p. 60.
34. Knight, Cotswold Lad, (1960) p. 111.
35. Horn. The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant.
(Dublin 1925) p. 13.
36. Ibid. p. 18.
37. Ibid, p. 25.
38. Lewis, Women in England, (Brighton 1984) p. 156.
39. Mr. AJ.

Footnotes to Chapter 4(b) Shopwork, Landwork and Other
Employment

1. Mrs. AH.
2. Mrs. AB.
3. Miss BI.
4. Mrs. BK.
5. Miss AQ
6. Miss AQ.
7. Mrs. AR.

8. Mrs. AS.
9. Mrs. AS.
10. Rowntree. How the Labourer Lives. (1913) p. 324.
11. Mrs. AM.
12. Mrs. BR.
13. Mrs. BR.
14. Mrs. AB.
15. Ward, Seasons of Change. (1982) p. 112.
16. Mrs. AB.
17. Mrs. AF.
18. Mrs. AF.
19. Mrs. AF.
20. Mrs. AH.
21. Mrs. AP.

CHAPTER 5 - WOMEN AS MOTHERS. HOUSEWIVES AND MANAGERS
(a) MARRIAGE

In this chapter oral evidence is examined to determine how marriage partners were chosen. Were villages in the period 1890-1940 as inbred as they had previously been reputed to be? The doctrine of separate spheres - endorsed by medical science, the political and legal system and the media - not only confined middle class women to the home but also the wives of the skilled urban working class; the concept of the "family wage" was promoted by unions and social scientists alike. Did village women copy this pattern?

The political, legal and social system was built upon the household led by the husband who as breadwinner supported, controlled and legally represented his dependant wife and children. Marriage was the implicit goal of most girls' training. At the village school girls' education included such domestic subjects as sewing, mending, knitting and, if there were the facilities, cooking. If this latter subject had not been specifically taught at school, girls had learnt it at home helping their mothers. Most in addition had had to look after younger siblings so they were well prepared for the role of housewife and mother. In the 1930's a full range of domestic "sciences" were taught, but service was traditionally considered one of the best training places. In Warne's Every-Day Cookery the maid of all work is admonished,

Recollect, my little general servant. that if your place is a hard one. it is also the best possible one for training you for a better. After all, too, you have not more to do, nor. in fact so much as you would have as the mistress of your own home when married. when you probably have to clean house. work for your family's support. and take care of children, besides enduring anxiety and the many cares of the mother and wife.(1)

Most girls married and found themselves fulfilling these roles. Indeed marriage was the one way to escape from the constant tutelage of the "ladies of the house" who supervised not only their servants' long hours of work but also their church going, morals and how they spent their limited spare time, often discouraging suitors or "followers". Even a change of job was dependent on character reference by the mistress. One respondent commented on how little choice there was for girls besides marriage:

That seemed to be the be-all and end-all of existence, didn't it? Why I can't think because most of their marriages must have been pure murder, mustn't they?(2)

Oral evidence suggests that unless the girls were unfortunate enough to marry a drunkard, it was not "pure murder". but it was often pure drudgery. It was economically imperative for country women to continue in their multiple roles. The low pay of agricultural workers necessitated that the whole family contributed to the family coffers. In such rural family businesses as village shops and market gardening the division of workplace and home had not occurred as it had increasingly in urban businesses so women had not withdrawn from the labour

force upon marriage. Rural working class women's lives after marriage were thus inconsistent with the prevailing norms for women. Like the wives of the urban poor, country wives turned to casual ill-paid jobs such as cleaning, taking in lodgers, and homework, areas which have been defined as "both practical and acceptable extensions of their normal tasks".(3)

Despite this double burden of housework and paid work, marriage offered a girl a certain status. A "spinster" was not only looked down upon, but was hard put to support herself. While a hard-working glover could earn nearly as much as a field-hand, a spinster glover had to live with her parents or a fellow glover, often a sister, to make ends meet. Mrs. BM's unmarried aunt was typical. She "did the gloving, and she lived at home and looked after her parents".(4) Shop work, cooking and teaching were the ways by which the spinsters interviewed in the survey earned their keep. Teaching in village schools was not confined to the middle class as the pupil-teacher system had allowed talented girls to learn on the job.

Marriage for affection, status, and for economic reasons (though not necessarily security) was, therefore, the goal of most women. Some found their choice of partner limited. There had been a steady drift from the countryside to the urban areas throughout the nineteenth century and it continued into the

1920s. In 1851 half the population of England and Wales was rural. by 1911 four out of five persons were living in towns (5). In addition to the migration to the towns, many young village men emigrated to the colonies. By the end of the nineteenth century the surplus of females in relation to males in the population as a whole had already started anxious debates. The First World War took a heavy toll of young men. In Childswickham for example there were 14 killed in the First World War out of a population of 492 *as compared to two in the Second*. Mrs AM's father was fortunate. her uncle was not.

Forty-two went away from Broadway station and he was the youngest. He was just over 16-1/2. He was sent on leave when his brother was killed, *compassionate leave*.(6)

All the boys killed were all pretty young - 17 a lot of them, though some were older and married. I had some cousins killed, three in all.(7)

There were many tragic tales, such as that told by Mr. BQ. His mother was ill.

She died in the April. My brother was killed in the beginning of May. It upset her him going abroad and joining the army, you know. He was porter at Fladbury Station here, my brother was. They came recruiting one day at the village hall, I remember it well. Packed to the doors. And my father come up to it late and he couldn't get in. If he had my brother wouldn't have joined, he wouldn't have let him join.(8)

Despite the losses caused by the war, many women continued to marry men from the same village or locally, as many of their parents had done before them. They explained that their range of choice was limited to potential partners in villages which

were within bicycling or walking distance. Many villages, like Snowhill, seemed inbred and insular.

Mother's family were called Turner. There were a lot of Turners up here. There was a Turner side with a lot of Kyte relations, then there were dad's Turners, which weren't Turners, you know, the real Snowhill Turners...Well, they always reckoned you'd got to live in Snowhill for 50 years before you were accepted.(9)

Mr. Hodge wrote that before the Second World War, most people in Snowhill married other people from the village, but his father, a groom at Snowhill Hill, travelled with the stud horses and met his mother in Berkshire.

I think my mother had rather a hard time when she first came to live in the village (in 1914) as nearly all the villagers were married to local people so she was treated like a foreigner, but being a very strong-willed person, she soon sorted things out and after a few years in the village, had quite a say in village affairs.(10)

One respondent from Bretforton, whose maiden name was Jelfs, commented,

There were so many Jelfs. It was a bit confusing really because there were so many families. A lot of the old families had boys and they stayed in the village, you see. And it gradually got there were so many families. And you see there were very few that we sort of claimed relationship with. We knew our aunts and uncles, but lots of the others .. you see my mother married a Jelfs and her sister married a Jelfs but they weren't - well, they probably had been in the distant past, but it had got farther and farther away. There were sort of umpteenth cousin sort of thing, and you didn't recognise them. But no it was confusing when you had a lot of Charles or Williams and that and the postman had to see, because they all seemed to keep to those types of names, you didn't have any exotic names.(11)

Intermarriage was common though by the end of the period this was increasingly frowned on by the families concerned. A respondent from Childswickham commented,

My uncle Jack married uncle Joe's sister, so it was brother and sister married brother and sister. There was quite a bit of intermarriage. Auntie Phil she married uncle Percy and they were second cousins, there was quite a bit of a to-do about it, family didn't want it because they were related. And then my auntie Norah married Ernie Simms and they were second cousins. There was a lot of it in other families, but they were the two in my family. And I went out with a boy called Bob Agg and his mother and my mother were cousins. Both our parents stopped us going with one another.(12)

Mrs. AN married the "boy just down the street" in Childswickham.

I knew him as a little lad, we grew up together. Years gone by all the people married someone in the village because we never went away to meet anyone. We used to go to the dances at Broadway and that, but apart from that that's as far as we used to go. There was no transport or anything in those days to get anywhere. Some married cousins, some married second cousins. Not too good, but my eldest brother and his wife were second cousins. My brother's wife was a Smith, that's an old name isn't it?(13)

There is a clannishness about *some of the old family names*. When a "Newbury" from the Broadway branch married one from the Childswickham branch, she was not entirely accepted.

There was one lot of Newburys from Broadway - that's Joan Newbury. She's an interloper really, she married Arthur Newbury.(14)

Carter, Smith, Agg and Newbury are the four family names which recur constantly in Childswickham. All the respondents from this village are related to one or more of these four families. Mrs. BN, nee Carter, commented,

Of course, the Carters are all related to each other. An aunt of my mother's, although she married a Carter, originally was a Carter, so we were a little bit related anyway. But families in villages were interrelated, weren't they?(15)

Though Seebohm Rowntree wrote anxiously in 1913 of the danger of constant intermarriage "and the consequent weakening of the original healthy families" which was being brought about by the "drift away from the country"(16), oral evidence demonstrates that the problem of consanguinity was only widespread in the more static villages and had been more common in the past. Childswickham was particularly "inbred" because it had no large houses which employed servants. In most villages this was the way fresh blood was introduced. Where there were girls employed in service or where there were other forms of employment, oral evidence presents a different picture.

Mrs. AB's father was born in Blockley "but they weren't local, they were Oxfordshire." She comments "people didn't roam about much then", (17) but when examining the Broadway area, it is surprising how much people did "roam".

Mrs. AE was born in Norfolk. She was in service and accompanied the junior branch of her employer's family who had moved to Willersey.

I came to help them get straight in the house, and my husband was working there, and I've been here ever since...He was carrying timber from the station, and coal and coke from the station to fuel the house. He had a horse and dray so he was working there quite a lot, and we met, and that's how I came to come here....Boys married girls that came into the village in service or something like that. They didn't all marry village girls. You hadn't got ways of going into other villages and that except by bicycle and that and walking. But there were girls that had to move about in service, and they met the

boys. (So the girls were the mobile ones?) That's right. Well you moved about to better yourself in service.(18)

Mrs. BG was born in a small village near Hereford. She moved to Broadway with the family she was in service with and met her husband at the local church.(19)

Mr. AO and his wife both grew up. met and married in Broadway. He remembers her as a child:

I can see her now. When me and my mates would be walking through Broadway she'd be going up to her grandmother's double gate there. She had a mass of long curly hair. She always used to look that solemn if we used to speak to her. She wouldn't even smile.(20)

But Mr. AO's mother came from London. She was in service with a family who came to Broadway on holiday, and his wife's mother had come on holiday with her sister from Birmingham, where she worked in a bag factory.(21)

Miss BI's mother and father were childhood sweethearts who went to school together in Broadway, but her grandmother was a Londoner who had come to Broadway on holiday and had met a widower farmer at Broadway Catholic church.(22)

Mrs. AK's mother met her husband when she was away in service. and brought him back to work in her father's market garden.

Mother, she was a housekeeper .. in this huge house on the way to Birmingham...This is how come she met my father. First of all she was an undercook and my father's mother was the main cook. She was mother's boss really...And he must have gone to visit his mother, that's how they met.

Dad was from the Birmingham area. If it hadn't been that mum had gone to work, they'd never have met I suppose.(23)

Mr. AL's father was born in Leicestershire. He left his father's farm and went to London as a coachman. where he met his wife who was working as a scullery maid at the Royal Free Hospital. They eventually returned to her village of Buckland where he worked as coachman for the owner of the manor.(24)

The apprenticeship system was also responsible for moving people of marriageable age around from village to village. Mrs. BK's father was a journeyman baker at Bourton-on-the-Water before returning to Broadway with a wife he met there. Mrs. AB's mother came to Blockley as an apprentice at the drapery shop there. Her husband's family had also moved into the village, as she is careful to point out. It took several generations before a family was accepted as "local".

Well he belonged to the village. Actually, well his family lived in the village. They didn't belong to it. Well, I mean they weren't Blockley people.(25)

Mr. BF's mother's family had moved from Scotland to Broadway in search of work. During the 1930s when the Gordon Russell Factory expanded. it drew a workforce to Broadway from many parts, as the oral evidence of landladies' families bears out. Mr. BF's mother rented to Welshmen,(26) and Mrs. BK married one of her parents' lodgers, a Jewish cabinet-maker from London employed there.(27)

Even the tight-knit community of Snowhill had its immigrant families. One set of Mr. Hodge's grandparents had moved around:

My grandfather on my father's side came from Norfolk, where he had been a small farmer, but like most farmers in those days, had a job to scratch a living, so he packed up and moved to Willersey where my father was born. My father was one of a family of nine ..They lived at Willersey for a few years, where my grandfather tried to work a smallholding without success. So they moved up to Snowhill where my grandfather took a job on a farm at Brockhampton and my father finished his schooling.(28)

The wedding was usually a quiet affair. There was often no time or money for an elaborate wedding, and usually only the immediate family attended, though if there were large local families on both sides as in some of the static villages this could add up to quite a crowd. The wedding of Mrs. AM's parents was an exceptionally big affair. Both were "Childswickamites" from large families. She reported they had "well over a hundred guests" including the choir.(29) Wedding receptions were held in the bride's home. There was neither the money or the room to invite many guests outside the family. Wedding presents were often of a practical nature; some exceptionally so.

I can remember two of my wedding presents, one was a load of muck for the garden, and the other was two laying pullets.(30)

Mrs. AR whose parents kept the village post office reported,

Nearly every household gave us something as a little wedding present. We knew everybody and also coming into the post office as well.(31)

Many had to wait a long time to be married. It was difficult to find housing. Parents expected grown children to contribute a large part of their earnings to the family budget - even girls in service sent much of their wages home - so it was difficult to save. Mr. and Mrs. AC were 28 and 26 years respectively when they married.

(Mrs. AC) We went together for seven years before we got married. (Why did you wait so long?) (Mr. AC) Well, we'd got nothing to get married with. I'd hardly got a penny when we was married, no. (Mrs. AC) I saved up some. Well I went to work in Springhill Gardens and lived at home, and that was how I was able to save some money. We weren't getting big pay then. Well, I saved up hundred pounds, that's what. (Mr. AC) It was a lot of money in them days.(32)

As the evidence demonstrates, people were surprisingly mobile in their young days, and it was not necessarily a local partner which they chose, especially in the larger villages. Whereas girls could choose to marry a husband from a different locality, the oral evidence produced no instance of them marrying into a different class. There are three cases of mothers working as the father's housekeeper before marriage, but there was no difference in their background, indeed in two cases the housekeeper was the sister of the deceased wife.

CHAPTER 5 - WOMEN AS MOTHERS, HOUSEWIVES AND MANAGERS
(b) "MAKING ENDS MEET"

In this chapter oral evidence is examined to determine how women managed their tight household budgets. Was there sufficient evidence of the importance of the housewife's role in the economy of the family to justify the claims made by such historians as Standish Meacham and Elizabeth Roberts that it was a critical one?

For society, as Linda Mahood comments, "The ideal working class woman was pious, subservient and thrifty".(1) The pivotal role of the mother as housewife and manager in a family with a tight budget was frequently acknowledged. Joseph Arch pointed out her crucial role in the 19th century. When his mother died he learned

That the working-man's home is no home at all, if there is not a good housewife within doors. Let his wife be a slattern, and a wilful, careless waster, - well, then, before very long, there will be woeful want stepping in, bringing angry words and worse behind, and driving love like smoke up the kitchen chimney; let his home be hugger-mugger, and it is only a man in a thousand who will not step down to the public-house for an hour's comfort..
(2)

The same vital role continued to be played by village women in the 1920s. Maurice Andrews wrote that his mother was "brought up to put everyone else first and herself last".(3) He evaluates her contribution to the family's survival:

Washing, cleaning, working on the land, and bearing children. Just a few shillings a week coming in to provide the necessities of life. When I arrived on the scene the

men of the village were still struggling to re-settle after that War to end all Wars. Some were making a good job of it, others could not cope. In a lot of cases the women were mainly responsible for what success was achieved. In my family's case, Mother was the victor. With no disrespect to my father, who God knows worked hard all his life for precious little reward, my mother was the one who bore the brunt and faced the hard world as it then was. By the time I was born my eldest brother, Bill, later to die at the age of nineteen of pneumonia, was already out working on Mr. Austin Williams' West End farm, and Nancy, the eldest girl, was about to go out into domestic service. There were by then six other children aged from thirteen down to two years.(4)

His sister, the fourth of eventually 11 children, explained that in addition to her own family her mother brought up two relations, one a cousin and the other a nephew.(5) Her father was a farm labourer and their families remained large even through the 1920s when the other groups represented in the survey began to limit their families. One of the reasons that farm labourers' families were so prolific can be explained by the fact that generally they married earlier than other groups. Housing was not such a problem as it was for other couples as a tied cottage usually went with the job.

A sample of 35 is too small a number to serve as a basis for a statistical analysis, but it is nevertheless interesting to follow the birth rate on its downward curve. In the group as a whole respondents reported that their parents' generation came from very large families of up to 13. In only one case did a respondent report a parent was an only child, and in this instance the child was the result of a late second marriage.

Farm labourers, market gardeners, and small farmers all produced the same size families. The average size reported was nine. After 1910 there is an interesting difference in the number of children of farm labourers and those of market gardeners. Respondents born between 1910 and 1920 still reported families of up to eight in all categories, but the largest families - 9, 13, and 11 children - were those of farm labourers. After 1930 there is a sharp drop for all categories, five being the largest family reported, and the majority of families having two children.

The Rowntree report How the Labourer Lives, a Study of the Rural Labour Problem, published in 1913, while urging better pay, housing and working conditions for the rural labourer, envisaged the role of their wives as the producers of a sturdy workforce for the towns:

The physique of the town population in the past has been maintained to some extent by constant reinforcement of the anaemic town dwellers by countrymen. But the source from which these reinforcements have been obtained is rapidly becoming exhausted. Already the country dwellers have given up their best, and the prospect, from the point of view of the maintenance of the national physique, is not bright ...But there is another point of view from which the matter should be considered - that of the national character. Work on the land, in constant contact with natural objects and often in comparative isolation, produces a solid strength of character which our England nation can ill afford to lose.(6)

Country women were not concerned with the debate on eugenics, although it affected them inasmuch as it delayed the availability of contraceptive devices. Their attention and

that of their husbands were focused on the practical problem of providing for each new mouth.

We had an old (market) gardener in Broadway here, used to live down the Evesham Road and one of his mates said to him, "Tom, I see the missus is going to have another young 'un." "Aye," he says, "I'll have to take to another acre of land." (7)

Many respondents reported a similar fatalistic attitude to frequent pregnancies.

Oral evidence points out that in this period there was a complete absence of any mention, let alone discussion between parents and children, of sexuality or family limitation. Pregnancy and sex were taboo subjects which respondents did not discuss with their parents. The following are typical responses:

There were three years between each of us, except my younger brother and there were five years between him and me. (Your mother never mentioned how she spaced her children?) No, you didn't talk about it in those days. It was just one of those things I think. You either had them or didn't have them. (8)

I was the eldest of eight. We were four girls and four boys. Nobody had ever heard of family planning or whatever. Most of them, well my husband was from a family of eight. (Your generation did seem to limit their families.) Well I had four, and we didn't seem to sort of plan. Well, we sort of had two and we didn't really want any more, but then the other two came along, and that was it. (9)

One respondent stated that there was nine years between her and her younger brother. She did not know the reason for such a long gap for her parents never talked about such things: "Oh

goodness no. I was nine, nearly ten, when he was born and I didn't know anything about what was happening."(10)

Mr. BF's father was one of ten children. He was born in 1914, one of only two. He didn't know why his family was small.

No idea. I was a late child. I was ten years younger than my brother. I think there was a girl - at birth I think - that didn't make it. I think. It was never discussed. Mother, I can remember her saying once or twice, "You did have a sister" and that's as much as I ever got to know about it. It was something we never discussed between ourselves. It was before my time.(11)

Field workers who often had the most prolific families could not afford to lose wages.

She kept having babies didn't she? I'd see her get off the wagon at night, then she'd have the baby and I'd see her back at work the next day. And she died picking beans, didn't she?(12)

In the period surveyed babies were still all delivered at home, often with the assistance of the local 'old wife' midwife (see chapter 6b) or district nurse rather than the doctor. Mrs. AM was born at home in 1925, but her sister, born in 1944, was delivered in hospital.

We had a nurse that came to live for a little while in the village. She delivered nearly all the babies. Then come my sister, my mother had to have my sister in Evesham. That was eight years after. That was the first start of babies being born in hospital.(13)

It was the mother's job to try and stretch the budget to feed and clothe the new arrivals. Mothers were constantly praised for being "good managers". Their management of the tight

family budget was crucial. Husbands and older children alike handed over their earnings and were doled out pocket money.

My mother always managed the money. I've got a feeling he used to hand over all the money. I'm not certain of that, but I think he did all his life. And she gave him back what she called "pocket money". But she was really a marvellous manager. She used to pay insurances out of that. I can remember after she died the insurance man came around and said she paid about a penny a week ...She'd save up for years for a new coat or something. She'd never have it unless she could afford to pay, or pay within a very short time. She was very, very thrifty.

I don't really know how my mother managed in those days because money was so scarce and yet she never sort of got into debt and we always had sufficient to eat and we were always clothed.(14)

The women prided themselves on keeping the family out of debt where possible. This was no mean accomplishment.

We were always straight about our money. Well you had to manage. I always seen to all the money. My husband never bothered. Pay the debts and what we had was ours.(15)

Debt was feared, but it was an expedient which had to be resorted to in bad times by the wives of small market gardeners and labourers right up through the 1930s. The necessity of giving credit to needy customers was often mentioned by the respondents who had been shopworkers. T. Seebohm Rowntree wrote of the heavy burden of debt incurred by most of the families interviewed in his survey in 1912 and 1913 and commented that only through a combination of debt and the acceptance of charitable gifts could they make ends meet.(16) Debt was apparently even more extensive in the 1870s, when Joseph Arch

wrote that the bread bill usually had to wait to be paid until the harvest (see footnote 17),

Debt was still a problem during the period surveyed. Respondents in Childswickham and Broadway reported that the payment for bread - the staple item of food for a large family - still had to wait for the harvest. Growers' wives had to obtain credit until the asparagus harvest came in. As asparagus was the best paying crop for market gardeners, it gave them good credit. The daughter of one of the Broadway bakers recalled,

There were a lot of customers down at Childswickham and they used to grow a tremendous lot of asparagus down there. Well, you know we had customers down at Childswickham with large families and they'd have the bread and my father used to say to me when I'd say, "Oh dear, so and so owes so much money". He'd say, "Don't worry, child, they'll pay when the 'grass' comes in. And we'd have customers like that would only pay us once a year when the 'grass' as it was called, when the 'grass' came in. (18)

This account was confirmed by another respondent, whose brother worked at the bakery.

Old Mr. Burrows would say, "See if you can get so much money off so and so, they've cut their asparagus - that's what it was made good money even in those days. They were able to get some off them then see, to pay some of their debt off. (19)

Labourers' wives with big families often had to obtain credit with no such security. The baker's daughter remembers that her father also extended credit to labourers' families who had little chance of ever catching up on their debts. "The agricultural workers had very low wages and large families. We

had lots of bad debts, but my father never refused them bread." (20)

We had a tremendous lot of bad debts. At least in Broadway. It was mostly agricultural workers and the wages were very low; used to be about 30 shillings a week, and they had big families. We were owed a tremendous lot of money, but my father never stopped anybody having bread. I said to my brother one night - when I did all the book-keeping and I was working when he came to the table - and I said to him, "You mustn't let those people have any more bread if they don't pay you" - it had run up to quite a good bill. And he said, "Don't talk so silly, they haven't got any money." That sort of thing was going on all the time. That was between the wars. (21)

The extent of the debts is astounding, as illustrated by one instance she remembered:

They were a big family, ten children. Well you know Hilda, one of the girls .. when she left school at thirteen she came to work for us at the shop .. You know that Hilda after she'd left Broadway and went away to work, her mother was ill. She was pretty ill and they sent for her to come back here and look after the family. And she came down to the shop one day and she had the bread book - they always used to have a bread book - and she put the bread book on the counter. And she said to my mother, "Can you tell me if this is right? I've an idea they owed about £24 for bread or something. And my mother said, "Yes, I'm afraid it is". She gave a ten shilling note and she said, "Take that off" and I shall send something every month until it's paid off, and she was the only one in the family knew. (22)

This would seem an extraordinary amount. Seebolm Rowntree's survey in 1912 and 1913, however, demonstrated that bread was the most costly item in the weekly budget of the families interviewed. Bread and meat remained the main items in the family food budget, even though pork was usually home produced. Mr. BF, who worked for one of the butchers in Broadway,

confirmed that he too had to extend credit to his customers.(23)

Mrs. BC's mother ran a small village shop in Snowhill. She was asked if the customers used to pay their bills. Her neighbour was present for part of the interview. Mrs. BC at first answered diplomatically, "Yes, the majority of 'em. If you didn't have it one week, you had what they could spare." However, when the neighbour was gone she added that her mother would have been a wealthy woman if she had been able to collect all her bad debts, but she couldn't say this before because the neighbour's family were some who owed the most.(24)

Mrs. AS's aunt ran the village shop in Childswickham.

I do feel that when my aunt ran the village shop most things that we had from there weren't paid for. I can remember going to her shop for a little bit of this and a little bit of that. "Mum will see you on Friday". It was ever so common that. "We'll see you on Friday or Saturday".(25)

Debt to small shopkeepers who were often neighbours, friends, potential employers for children, and sometimes relatives was not only embarrassing but detrimental to the family's good name and the woman's status as a "good manager". Mrs. AS reported her embarrassment working at the grocer's shop in Broadway where her mother "often couldn't pay the bills"... "But of course we weren't the only ones, there were so many more."(26)

Staying out of debt was the difficult goal most women set for themselves and their family.

Such economic goals on the part of wives often involved the management of their husbands so that money was handed over on payday before too much could be spent at the pub. A good husband was one who handed over his weekly earnings untouched. Drink was the mortal enemy of many of the women, which could bring ruin if her husband indulged to excess (*see chapter 7a*). Where the mother also indulged, there was total chaos.

We had one or two living around. She used to drink. I mean we used to laugh about it. They used to come home drunk and that. I suppose some of them (the children) were proper, what we called urchins, but I suppose in those days you didn't take much notice because it was the norm you know.(27)

It was a hard life and it made some of the women very tough characters. Mrs. AS's father was very easy going, her mother was not.

She used to domineer him. He used to lash back occasionally. She was let to go her own way too much. But she was deprived and she had to have an outlet for her feelings, but there were so many others deprived too... she was rather a proud person you see, unlike my dad, my dad didn't want anything but peace and quiet, enough to eat and enough to drink and he loved the village...It could have been that they were brought up in the Victorian period and their mothers had been very strict. They were tyrants in their time..

She ruled everybody and she had a saying, "I don't want to rule you, but if you'll be guided by me", and we knew then we'd got to conform..She dominated us, me in particular, and my father.

...I can remember some of the young married women who came into the village just as I was growing up were different. I can think of three at least who were gentle and they

seemed to be almost a race apart from most of the women from this village...And the Simms mother, she was a terror. They were almost tyrants.(28)

But when life was hard only the privileged could be "gentle" women. As children these women had not been reared to be fragile, helpless females, but as workers who could turn their hand to many chores. Only the women who had a shop could afford to employ any help. Mrs. AB's mother did the cooking and cleaning, as well as serving in the shop, but she employed a young girl.

She'd just clean up, and we always had an old woman who did the washing once a fortnight. It was a horrible job. We had the copper going and steam everywhere. Somebody used to take me out because, obviously, if you've got a shop and work long hours you can't find the time.(29)

Miss AQ's mother looked after the house as well as the shop, but she employed a girl of 13 to help with the children.(30)

Most women had to make do with their daughters' help as the girls got older. Domestic roles were strictly divided by gender. Very few men helped with any work in the house except shoe repairs. Even the decorating was often done by the mother. If the father was up first, however, he might light the fire, and some made the tea in the morning. One father cooked the breakfast.

Dad would get up, light the old range and when it was going he'd cut a couple of rashers out of the bacon which was hanging on the staircase, or whichever happened to be the coldest wall of the house, and he would put the enamel plate - and I can remember it so well, it was chipped, the white enamel plate with chips - and he would get the

toasting fork, it was quite a long one. and I would kneel at the side of him and as the fat oozed out onto this enamel plate I would be with my bread. dip it in the bacon fat and with Dad's Sauce by my side. and that was my breakfast..And Henry, my brother. that would be his breakfast as well. And then I think that dad ate that fat bacon. either for breakfast or what is more probable, took it between two slices of bread to the rookery or the middle bank where he worked and that would be his lunch break.(31)

Some respondents remembered their father lending a hand. but most fathers were like Mr. BF's, whom he described as not being a "very domesticated cat".(32)

Women as mothers. housewives and managers were the centre of the family, managing children and husband alike. They were responsible for the family's manners and morals, as well as controlling its often inadequate economy. No wonder village women were often recalled as tough matriarchs as well as "the angel in the house".

CHAPTER 5 - WOMEN AS MOTHERS, HOUSEWIVES AND MANAGERS
(c) WOMEN'S WORKPLACE, THE HOME

In this chapter oral evidence is examined to form a picture of rural housing in the period. Did it show any marked improvement after the housing acts of 1890 and 1909? How did women manage these extremely labour intensive homes?

After the franchise was extended to the agricultural labourer in 1884 the dilapidated condition of rural housing was made the subject of several government reports and publicised by radical newspapers like the Daily News. The newly elected rural Liberal radical, Joseph Arch, preached that the former disenfranchisement of tenants had been the key to rural slums. He pointed out that the rural villages lacked the sanitary arrangements of the enfranchised towns and required an Agricultural Labourers' Dwelling Act similar to the Artisans' Dwelling Act to introduce sanitary arrangements, improve water supplies, and "good and decent cottages"(1)

The extension of the franchise did bring some cosmetic changes. Medical Health Officers were given new powers to inspect rural housing by the Housing Acts of 1890 and 1909, but the reports of such inspectors demonstrate how little power they actually had to effect the changes needed. If they had obtained closing orders on all dwellings considered unfit for

habitation, the housing shortage would have been exacerbated. The Broadway Parish Council in 1906 pointed out to the Evesham Rural District Council

That the housing shortage was getting worse... owing in great measure to the extreme stringency of the Bye Laws now in force which, though perhaps well adapted in Towns, are unsuitable for Rural Districts and make it impossible for private persons to build cottages which they let at such a rent as working men can afford to pay.(2) (See footnote 2 for the whole letter)

It was an economic as well as a political problem. The building of new cottages was uneconomical. The average cost of a new three-bedroom cottage in the years before the First World War was £150. In order to provide a reasonable return on this investment and to cover the cost of repairs, the economic rent would have been between three and sixpence and four shillings a week, an impossible amount when agricultural wages were no more than fourteen shillings a week.(3)

Dr. William Savage, a Medical Health Officer, blamed damp, substandard, and overcrowded housing for the prevalence of tuberculosis, rheumatism and respiratory diseases. (See footnote 4 for his definition of the housing problem in 1919.)

The Royal Commission on the Dominions in 1914 noted that lack of rural housing was one of the reasons that men emigrated.(5)

As the oral evidence suggests, it took more than the franchise, inspection by medical officers, and government reports to radically change rural housing conditions. What Joseph Arch in 1898 had described as "garnished hovels" with outside trimmings of ivy and climbing roses" but "undrained, and "unhealthy within" were still very much in evidence.(6)

Much depended on the mother's housekeeping and gardening abilities. Roses in the garden and whitewash on the walls could disguise the harsh realities but did not reduce her labours. Mrs. AF's mother made the best out of the cottage the family rented in the 1920s and 1930s in Bretforton.

I think it had been a farm cottage. Cobblestones up to the door. At the bottom of the garden was a well, and the other side of that well was the cowsheds belonging to the farm. And mother was a keen gardener and we had clematis and big white roses and honeysuckle all over the front. It wasn't a big house. *There was a big living room with a window at each end.* And then, well we used to call it the pantry, I suppose it was really the kitchen. But we had no water laid on, no gas or electricity. We had to get water from a well outside, and oil lamps. And in the big living room there was one of these big inglenook fireplaces with hobs each side and ovens and my mother cooked on there, but she also had a primus stove, oil stove, out on a table out in what we called the pantry. It was a biggish room, but we didn't use it, we hadn't even got a sink in it because we had no water laid on. We had a big table with a big bowl on it and we washed up on there. You had a jug and basin in the bedroom to wash, to wash your face. And then we had one of those big long baths we used to bring in and had in front of the fire. We'd heat the water. We had a copper. You lit a fire under the copper to heat the water. I don't know, it was just how things were in those days. We had to go down the garden path to the toilets and it was a brick-built toilet, and it was covered with Virginia creeper, so that it was disguised. Inside the walls were whitewashed and that.(7)

Despite the lack of facilities this is almost a pastoral idyll compared to the homes remembered by many respondents. The housewife worked in conditions which made all housework laborious. The absence of piped water, electricity and often gas made women's domestic work heavy and time-consuming. Housing was usually rented or tied to the husband's job. Many of the respondents grew up in the type of cottages which the Government Commissioners complained of as conducive to ill-health and immorality, being damp and often chronically overcrowded, housing not only the immediate family but often relatives as well. However, housing standards varied enormously. A few successful market gardeners were able to buy their own homes in this period, village tradesmen often had adequate accommodation above the shop, but many labourers' families lived in extremely primitive and often grossly overcrowded cottages. Until the advent of the council house, many rural families lived in totally inadequate housing. Repairs and modernisation were often neglected by the landlord. Uncertainty of tenancy and lack of money discouraged families from carrying out repairs themselves. Much rural housing was condemned as unfit for human habitation and demolished in the 1930s.

Some of the two-bedroom labourers' cottages had been part of more substantial houses built in the 17th and 18th centuries and divided in the late 19th century by lath-and-plaster

partitions to provide more accommodation for farm workers. These flimsy divisions were neither fireproof nor soundproof.

These homes, as well as the family income, dictated the mode of family life and were the workplaces of the mothers and to a large extent their daughters. Many farm labourers lived in tied cottages, they had to move if the father changed employer, and families could be evicted if the father died or was incapacitated. Mr. Green, a member of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, commented in 1920 "cottages were scarcer than men." (8) Families also had to move cottages according to the dictates of their employer/landlord or his agent. Mr. AL was born in 1913. His father worked as groom on the large estate of Buckland Manor, which owned much of Buckland and Laverton. He recalls:

We had about four houses - mother and father did while they were here. When we come here I was brought up where my sister-in-law lives just up the road; we had to move from there and we moved up to a thatched cottage halfway up the village. They asked us to move, they had an agent then and they could be awkward. We had to move from there, we moved right up to the stables..we were up there six years, my dad was looking after the horses, then we moved by the shop. I don't know where we didn't move, we got fed up on it. (9)

The estate cottages in which Mr. AL grew up in Laverton usually had three bedrooms. This was spacious for farm workers' housing and reflected the status of the owners of Buckland Manor. "Closed" villages like Buckland and Laverton, where most cottages were owned by the manor, often provided better housing

than "open" villages, where small landlords lacked the capital to repair cottages and had little incentive when rents received were so low.

Our cottage belonged to Mr. Smith - he's up in the churchyard, James Smith. He owned our two cottages (semi-detached), the forge and two thatched cottages just opposite the brook. The rent was half-a-crown - might have been less.(10)

Maintenance was sadly neglected. Mr. Smith's daughter later sold the two cottages by the brook. "They were only let for two shillings a week. I mean they were getting very rickety."(11) "Rickety" or no, one of these cottages housed a family of ten. They were condemned in the 1930s and demolished.

Even relatively prosperous landlords were reluctant to spend money on their properties when they produced so little return in rent. Sid Knight's family rented their cottage in Broadway from the village jeweller and clockmaker, whom he ironically describes as "our podgy-gutted landlord, who could not afford to put a window in the sleeping place of four young kids".(12)

More common than the three-bedroom Laverton cottages were those such as the one in Snowhill where Mr. AD, born 1914, grew up:

Well, there was a little room which was a living room, a little tiny, what we called a pantry at the back. There was no windows to it, you either had to have the door open or a candle on all the time when you did all the washing up. You could hardly move in there, and there was two bedrooms. Well there was a house next to it that was

condemned - the whole row was condemned at that time - but we had to live there, there was nowhere else, and they let us have the one nextdoor too. Because there were three boys and a girl and we had to have somewhere separate to sleep. So we just slept in the other one, because it wasn't fit to live in.(13)

While middle class observers and clergymen expressed concern about the immorality of overcrowding, this demonstrates the length to which families would go to separate the sexes. In extreme cases of overcrowding children were sent to sleep at relatives'. (See chapter 8b, The Extended Family.)

Small seventeenth century cottages often consisted of only two rooms, the upper rooms being reached by a ladder. Some of these were still to be found. Mrs. BB, for example, was born in such a one-up, one-down cottage in Snowhill in 1900.

There used to be two cottages where I was born and now it's only one..You had to go straight up the wall with a ladder, not steps, stairs or nothing, up a ladder.(14)

Fortunately the family were later able to move to a two bedroom cottage in the yard of the pub.

Though the stone cottages looked substantial, with walls between 18 inches and two feet thick,

their sturdy appearance was apt to belie their powers to resist cold and damp, especially when, as was more often the case than not, the foundations were built of dry rubble with no method of preventing rising damp, with the flagstone floor laid directly on the ground.(15)

This was confirmed by the interviews. Mrs. BR recalled the cottage in Childswickham where she was born in 1905, "It was

damp in the cottage - blue flagstones, the damp came through. It was soaking wet in the bedrooms, the walls."(16) Another Childswickham cottage was even damper, the one bedroom cottage which housed a family of five was liable to flooding from Badsey Brook.

I can remember the floods being in there. You couldn't do much but go upstairs until it went down. It was such a mess. And they had floods in there for years afterwards. It's not very nice when you can see the water coming in is it?(17)

The cottages were cold. Mrs. AS, remembers Mill Cottage, Childswickham:

A very cold house. It was like a fridge, a large fridge. There was only the range and no heating anywhere else at all. There was an oven (in the range) and we used to heat bricks for our beds, not hot water bottles.(18)

Mr. Hodge's family used the same system.

Our hot water bottle was a builder's brick heated in the oven and wrapped in a piece of blanket, and that was just to warm the bed if we had a cold or were ill. *But most families had to share beds, so we kept one another warm.*(19)

Many recalled that they shared beds, sometimes four to a bed.

Miss BJ was one of eleven children,

We had three bedrooms. Well, as I say, we were never at home all together, but in the back room we had a double bed and a single bed, in the middle bedroom we had a double bed, and at one stage - I suppose it must have been when the boys left school, when the girls left school they left home and they stayed away - but with the boys it was different, they went to work by day and came home by night, so they used to sleep two at the top and two at the bottom.(20)

Where the family kept chickens they often had feather beds to keep out the cold.

I always remember our feather beds, oh lovely. They had to be shook every day because otherwise they would have gone lumpy. Oh they were lovely. We used to have a stone hot-water bottle. That used to be put in the bed wrapped in a cloth and my mother used to make a dip, and we used to lie in this dip, lovely and warm. It was like an enormous fat duvet, but you couldn't have laid underneath it; it was too thick.(21)

Sometimes attics could provide extra sleeping accommodation, though they were hot in summer and icy in winter.

We had an old fashioned kitchen with a very old chimney at the back which they used to bake bread in, and one room to live in, and two bedrooms, and a big attic upstairs. You could get two double beds in up there easily, if you put them longways, not under the eaves.(22)

Council houses, which began to be built in the 1920s, were still without many facilities but were considered quite luxurious by village standards and were eagerly sought after. Mrs. AG's family moved from a small cottage to a council house in 1921.

Well to us I suppose, well to my mother, it was sort of modern, but I mean we still had an outside toilet. A bucket toilet. It wasn't a flush toilet when they first went in. And, of course, we had no electricity, no gas - we used to have oil lamps... When we originally went there we had a big coal stove like in the kitchen with an oven, and the same in the front room. We had two fires with ovens. The one perhaps smaller in the front room than the back..It cost about five bob a week then in those days. That's what they paid for it. And we had huge gardens. They still have. They've got big gardens at the back. Very nice houses, very well made, but of course very sort of basic then to what they are now.(23)

Mr. AL, a farm labourer, was too diffident to apply for such luxurious housing. However, employer paternalism came to the rescue. His wife worked as a domestic for Lady Victoria Forrester. He recalled,

She was on the Cheltenham Borough Council, one of the head ones. And she said, "Why hasn't Bernard put his name down for one of the new houses?" Well, I thought I couldn't afford the rent. "Rubbish," she says. So I didn't know how to fill the paper in, so I had to go up there and she did the papers and I was allotted one.(24)

The division and sale of many of the large estates during and after the First World War gave some enterprising villagers the opportunity to buy their own homes.

1911 the squire, he died. Coronation Day. I remember Mr. Smith getting on a dray and he said, "I've got some very bad news. The squire's passed". They sold the village in 1913. How much do you think the houses in New Street fetched? £150! One of the women, Rachel Newbury's sister, she went and cried to the agent and they let her have it for a hundred pounds.(25)

Housing conditions were much better for the larger market gardeners, farmers, and tradesmen. One respondent, born in Cropthorne in 1909, had an extremely enterprising family. Her father, a market gardener, was able to buy his own house and post office.

I was probably about ten or twelve when he picked himself up and bought it. There were about ten rooms. He bought the whole of the house and then my father (he was a very handy man) he divided the end. Made it into a cottage for the carter.

He built at the side of the house, catching all the sun, like a conservatory. He built tables so we could all sit and then he put the stove in. We had all our meals there. It was a sunny, light room and we could keep the other rooms for going in in the evenings.(26)

Miss AQ, born in 1902, was brought up over her father's baker's shop in Broadway.

The passage went through to the back. This was our sitting room. It was very nice that was. There were three bedrooms in the front and there was one behind... We had four bedrooms. We didn't need that much but we often had a

visitor. And the kitchen at the back and the family room. Originally it was two cottages.(27)

Her father started by renting the shop and accommodation. The landlord lived in Canada and the property was put up for auction in 1926.

He didn't know whether he'd be able to afford to buy it or not. I think it was rather wonderful because there were a lot of businessmen who wanted it and it was sold by auction at the Swan. And he was scared stiff that he wouldn't have enough money to buy it. You know the auctioneers started the property at £400 and he didn't have a bid against him - it was knocked down to him. That wouldn't happen in these days. He was a Broadway man. He was thought a lot of and he knew everybody.(28)

Common to all these dwellings, large or small, was the total absence of labour-saving devices. All the functions of keeping house remained extremely labour intensive.

Harold Andrews, writing in 1969, could still recall women cooking over an open fire shortly before the First World War,

Auntie Bessie had a large three-legged iron pot that hung from a hook in the chimney over a log fire on the open hearth. They had no oven. Into this pot went a conglomeration of vegetables, herbs, rabbit, bacon from a home fed and cured pig. On Sundays a lump of shin of beef was added. A string net of potatoes was laid over the top to steam, and masses of suet dumplings mingled with the whole. Even now, sixty years after, I can smell the delicious aroma.(29)

Iron ranges, which had first become common in manufacturing districts towards the end of the eighteenth century, spread to country districts after the railways were built, as they were dependent on coal supplies. The replacement of the pot

suspended over a wooden fire by a stove hotplate or hob made cooking cleaner as pots were no longer blackened by soot. The ovens in the ranges were often temperamental but were easier to use than the brick-lined bread ovens built into the wall at the side of the open fireplace. With this exception, there was little change in housekeeping equipment *from that of the 19th century* until gas was gradually introduced in the 1930s.

This big black range in the inglenook in the living room or in the fireplace in the kitchen was the sole means of heating as well as cooking and boiling water. Sometimes this was supplemented by a paraffin primus for boiling water for a morning cup of tea before the fire, lit first thing in the morning, had had time to warm. It was often reported that it was father's job to light the morning fire, but it was mother's job to blacklead the range to stop it rusting and to polish the brass knobs and fittings. Coal, kindling and logs had to be brought in, cinder and ashes sorted and disposed of. Often it was the boys' job to bring in the fuel. The range could often be temperamental.

When I say about my mother's cooking problems, I don't think you could expect very much from an old black range. It depended on the way of the wind and the oven was either very cold or too hot. It was difficult. They used coal and wood and, of course, I can remember potato peelings were dried and put on the back of the fire and that sort of thing.(30)

From the 1860s paraffin lamps had started to replace rush lights and candles, giving a cheap and effective light. Gas and electricity were late in being introduced to rural districts. Gas started to arrive in the 1930s, but it was not until the 1950s that some villages had electricity. Blockley, with its many abandoned water-powered silk mills, was the exception. These were converted to produce electricity and it proudly boasted of being the first village to possess "an electric light installation". Lord Northwick's son-in-law, Edward Spencer-Churchill, was the "prime mover"(31), and his house in 1885 was one of the first to possess electric light. Shortly afterwards, Joyner's grocery shop advertised that it was "illuminated by electricity", celebrating with the jingle,

Winter's coming cold and dark
 Young and old may miss the mark;
 At JOYNER's there's ELECTRIC LIGHT
 Take there your cash and you'll do right.(32)

In 1931 this system was modernised and amalgamated. A tourist brochure on Blockley (ca. 1910) also thanks the generosity of the late Lord Northwick for the fact that its "water supply and sanitation are in a thoroughly reliable state."(33) In this too it was unique.

Water supply was a problem for most women. Jane Rendall writes,

The fetching of water was one of the most fundamental of daily tasks for both urban and rural women throughout this period; it remains largely unacknowledged work by historians, though it was essential to the life of the household.(34)

It was a time-consuming duty for women and children, especially on the Monday washday.

There was no water in the house. We fetched the water on the green. There was a tap. We didn't have to pump it. All the way round the cross they were there on a Monday morning to get water for the washing. It was my job to get the water when I went to school.(35)

There were also queues in Snowhill in the 1920s.

Water was quite a problem, as there was just two taps, one at each end of the village, from which water was being endlessly carted, although about three or four had their own wells. Sunday night was usually the main water carrying night, we would probably carry about twenty buckets between us, and fill up tin baths and tubs ready for washing, etc. Our family were lucky because the nearest tap was only about thirty yards away, whereas some families had to carry it 200 yards or more which made water very precious and the same water was used for quite a number of things.(36)

Mrs. AK's mother, in Saintbury in the beginning of the 1930s, still used to use well-water for washing clothes, though there was also an outside tap shared by six cottages.

Mother used it for washing clothes. It was much softer. She always used it, drew it out and used it for the boil. Because you see we didn't have the gas - well there was no gas. It was oil lamps and coal fires and you had one of these big stone boilers to heat your water to boil. The washhouse joined the house - ours did - some of them were separate but ours was joined. And it had a little fire underneath; you burned all your rubbish and everything there. It used to take mum all day to do our washing. She used to start early in the morning and it took her until tea-time. You had bars, big bars of soap, and you grated it up and put it in your boiler and you boiled and boiled and boiled. Mum wouldn't boil anything else with a white wash. It was just white things only. And it was beautifully white. Her washing always was. And always used the blue bag you see.(37)

After rinsing twice in a washtub the wash was blued and starched. The clothes were then mangled and hung out in the garden to dry.

Some of the washing was very heavy, "We're talking about great big twill sheets, not the thin polyester ones we have." (38) Drying could be a problem. On wet days it had to be hung by the fire. There were no airing cupboards, so the washing was aired overnight on a line over the fireplace or on a pulley attached to the ceiling. It was ironed and put away the next day, often with lavender between the sheets. The heavy black irons were heated in front of the fire.

You used to stand the iron in front of it, on a grid thing. You had two you see, one was heating while you used the other. They were very heavy. They were solid, but quite effective. (39)

Because the wash was such long, hard work, the Monday meal was usually simple.

Monday was always washing day..so that was cottage pie day. That was mincemeat. Either cottage pie or cold meat and pickles and whatever was left over of the pudding which was a pie or something you know. (40)

Sometimes the washhouse was shared between two or three cottages and a rota had to be established which precluded the traditional Monday wash for some. This could cause problems:

There was a large copper in the brewhouse which was used for the week's washing, and this was shared with three or four families, although a few houses had their own. So each family had a certain day for the use of it. There were sometimes a few arguments because someone had left it

dirty or untidy, but again that was part of village life.(41)

It is no wonder that respondents reported that underclothes were only changed once a week, usually after the Saturday night bath so that the family were clean for Sunday.

Today you wouldn't dream of getting up and putting on the drawers you'd had on the day before, but in those days it was a once a week thing to change all your clothes. In fact you'd only have one to wash and one to wear - if you were lucky!(42)

Bathrooms and indoor plumbing, like electricity, were late arrivals in the villages. It was unusual to have an indoor bathroom before the Second World War. It usually entailed the sacrifice of the smallest bedroom upstairs or the pantry downstairs.

The only respondent who grew up in a house with a bathroom was Mrs. AG whose parents moved into their new council house in 1921.

We had a bath you see. It was marvellous. We always had a bathroom right from the time the houses were built. What we called the washhouse was outside the back door, and in there was a boiler that you used to wash the washing in, but once a week they used to fill this up with water and it used to run through, there were taps in the bathroom, and it used to run through from this boiler. And it was bath water you see. It was a good idea. We had that for years. Right up till, oh after, the war - long after the war. We had this boiler and we used to warm the water in there for the bath. Of course, all that's changed now, you see they've got bathrooms upstairs now.(43)

By the mid-thirties, when Mrs. AG was in service, the council houses in Wickhamford had gas, electricity, and an indoor

toilet. She was shocked at the conditions prevailing in her employers' house in the small village of Cowsden, near Upton Snodbury.

They had oil lamps right up to the war. They didn't have any electrics you see. And they cooked on an oilstove and an open fire. An open log fire they used to cook on. I mean they were primitive while we here were modern. That was the thing. I mean I used to go home to bath. They hadn't a bath. No they hadn't got a bathroom. Although they were sort of people who'd call themselves middle class, but they hadn't got a bathroom. It was strange really.(44)

The other respondents reported bathing in a tin bath in front of the fire on a Saturday night so that they would be clean for church next day. Until bobbed hair became fashionable, head-lice were a problem which the Saturday night bath did not always solve. School log books frequently record children being sent home because of this problem:

We used to dread it when the nurse came round nitpicking with this long hair. And my mother used to souse it in paraffin. They used to rub your hair in paraffin so you didn't get nits. And what a performance to have your hair washed because it was so long, and to dry it.(45)

Toilets were accommodated in an outhouse down the garden, often close to the pigsty. Sometimes they were shared with the neighbours. Mr. Hodge gives a very graphic description:

(They) were nearly always at the top end of the garden, sometimes as far as 30 yards. I suppose they had to be because of the smell. A lot of them were what we called vault lavatories, which meant that there was a bricked in pit which was only cleaned out about twice a year. This was done by lifting a slab outside and scooping it out with a kind of ladle on a long pole, and tipping it into a wheelbarrow, then wheeling it to the top of the garden and burying it. Our neighbour always emptied his into his

celery trench and grew the best celery in the village, but I'm afraid I didn't fancy any.

The vaults were usually shared between two or three families, and there was always someone trying to miss a turn. You couldn't blame them really. I know you had to be very careful where you walked for the next few days after that episode. A few of the houses had large buckets, which was much better, but they were apt to let them get over full, which often resulted in a shoeful, which wasn't very pleasant.

The toilet rolls those days were the Daily Mail, Evesham Journal, and the Birmingham Gazette which were cut up in squares and a piece of string threaded through the middle and hung on the wall. Some of the vaults were two seaters, with one hole smaller than the other, which I believe was meant for a child, although I don't remember ever sitting next to anyone. So after all that no wonder everyone had a chamber pot, or "jerry" as we called it, under the bed.(46)

Keeping the house clean, if less unpleasant, was as arduous as cleaning the outhouse. That a middle class observer of the Cotswolds could write at the turn of the century, "Most of the cottages are kept scrupulously clean; they have an air of homely comfort which calls forth the admiration of all strangers"(47) is a tribute to the hard work of the women. Living and working on the land for the housewife meant a constant battle with mud in the winter and dust in the summer. The coal and log fired ranges added to the dust. The flagstones and red tiled floors were swept and washed frequently, as were the doorsteps. The soapy washing water was not wasted, but used for this purpose after the wash. Little in these households was wasted. Many of the mothers who had been in service strove to keep up the standards they had learned in the big houses.

Copper and brass was often cleaned once a week. One mother made her own beeswax and turpentine polish and kept her elm floors, stairs, and oak furniture glowing. She was perhaps too houseproud:

I always felt the house came first, which of course did affect you, it's got to. In retrospect I'm glad, because her belongings were so important to her. She loved her bits and pieces, they were her life.(48)

One of the biggest problems in trying to keep the homes clean and hygienic was the often chronic overcrowding. The two-up, two-down cottage in which Mrs. BR was raised housed her mother, father, three daughters, son-in-law, baby grandson, and the son-in law's small sister.(49) Respondents came from families of up to 13 children, housed in two or three bedroom cottages which must have been exceedingly congested, even though the girls in the family would have left home for service when 13 or 14 years old, and often before the youngest babies were born.

Mr. Hodge notes that

Snowhill has a population of around 140 residents and although there are almost twice as many houses today, I would think that the population in my boyhood was somewhere around that figure, as in those days practically all the villagers were land workers and families would average around five or six per house, compared with today it would be about two to two-and-a-half per house (50)

It is evident that there was a great range of housing standards, with shopkeepers and the more successful market

gardeners enjoying relatively good housing. While council housing, offering the novel amenity of inlaid water, began to replace some of the most dilapidated housing in the 1920s and 1930s, most village housing remained at a very primitive standard, making housework extremely labour intensive.

CHAPTER 5 - WOMEN AS MOTHERS, HOUSEWIVES AND MANAGERS
(d) FOOD AND CLOTHING

In this chapter oral evidence is examined to determine how women managed to feed and clothe their families. It was found that while families remained poor, diet had improved considerably since the nineteenth century. In the 1870s Joseph Arch reported that farm labourers' families lived "on potatoes, dry bread, greens, and herbs, kettle broth and tea which was coloured water; there was a bit of bacon for the man now and then, but fresh meat would come like Christmas, once a year." (1) The Allotment Acts of 1887 and 1890 extended to villagers with small gardens the chance to grow more vegetables and to keep a pig. These allotments were very popular and remained so through the *Second World War*. *Broadway Parish Council Minutes, December 7, 1932, noted that it was their "duty to provide such allotments (not exceeding 5 acres)".* (2) In addition, cheap imports of meat brought the Sunday joint to many more tables.

Seebohm Rowntree wrote in 1913 that agricultural labourers' wages were generally insufficient "to maintain a family of average size in a state of merely physical efficiency". (3) However, Francis Heath, in his survey "British Rural Life and Labour", published in 1911, quotes Board of Trade surveys of the typical daily diets for labouring families in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire which gives bread and cheese

as the main staple, potatoes and other vegetables with fresh meat once or twice a week. The importance of allotments, gardens and pigkeeping is noted. (See footnote 4.)

When the subject of food was discussed, it was frequently reiterated that the family "lived off the land". Cottages were small but gardens were quite often big and where these bordered the village there was often an orchard behind them, and in addition many families also worked a quarter acre or more of allotment. Most of the vegetables were home-grown. Potatoes formed an important part of the diet, both for the family and for the pig. Mrs. BR remembers they kept a 30 gallon tub of potatoes under the stairs.(5) Virtually all the families, tradesmen as well as those employed on the land, kept a pig. Most had chickens and could also supplement their protein by rabbit meat. Families produced most, if not all, their own vegetables, fruit and meat.

Fathers and sons were kept busy producing vegetables and looking after the pig (though feeding the pig could be a woman's job). Mothers and daughters were kept busy preparing and storing the season's foodstuffs. While bottling did not become widespread until the Women's Institute promoted it during the Second World War, jams, pickles and wines were made in large quantities. Mr. AL remembers his mother making "pots and pots of jam, especially Pershore plum."(6)

Except where the family had its own patch of corn, or spent much time gleaning, only a few mothers (usually those who had been cooks in service) made their own bread, though this was an important item of diet. The husbands who could not return home for lunch were usually supplied with bread and cheese, accompanied sometimes by cider, but often with cold tea. The oral findings were confirmed by F. Heath's survey of agricultural labourers' family expenditure, where he noted that it was in the north and eastern counties rather than in the Midlands that bread was baked at home.(7) The respondents noted that even when bread was made from homegrown corn it was often baked by the baker.

There was a cooperative threshing operation. There were two or three ricks. And the old engine would come. This was one site here, right inside this gate. And the thresher was there and they used to make their own bread. They used to thresh the corn and get it ground at the mill into flour and then take it to the bakehouse to get the bakers to make it into bread for us, into long loaves.(8)

Years gone by people used to grow some wheat, and they had it ground at the old mill, and then..my mother used to put some flour in a white callico bag. (It was taken to Baker Brown in Broadway) Then he'd make it into the bread and bring the bread back.(9)

However, one farmer's wife baked large amounts of bread once a fortnight in a bread oven built into the wall of the back kitchen.

She made great big what you called "batch cakes". It was bread but we called it a batch cake. Just a huge round cake and then she did sometimes, on special occasions make what you call the cottage loaf, two-tier..(How did she store it?) Well she put potato in it, there was a certain amount of potato. I can remember seeing her mash it all up.(10)

Her mother also made her own butter and sold it at Moreton market. In May and June, when she had a surplus, she salted it down in big crocks for the winter.

Though families were often poor, because so much food was home-grown they usually had enough, except during the First World War.

My parents were struggling to make ends meet, but we always had enough food, except in the First World War. We were short of food then, more than in the Second War. The bread was terrible. It was grey and it used to stick on the knife. I don't know what they put in - you'll never find out now!(11)

As discussed in chapter 3(d), in the First World War some children suffered real poverty and Virol was donated to schools to help certain children "in need of nourishment."(12) Some councils provided midday meals for the school children:

We had the parish room and they did hot meals. It was a very good meal. It was nearly always soup or stews or things like that.(13)

The food women prepared was solid and filling: porridge, bread and dripping, fat bacon, stews with dumplings, soups, and boiled suet puddings. Where the woman had been in service in a kitchen before marriage the family enjoyed a more varied diet, but all commented that there were no luxuries. While the Vale market gardeners sent pounds and pounds of asparagus to London, their own families were only allowed the rejects. the "prue"

(sprue) and the crooked spears. Mrs. AK's mother had been a cook and housekeeper before she married.

We always had a variety, but you didn't have luxuries in those days, but we were lucky insomuch that she seemed able to make something out of nothing, if you know what I mean. My grandfather always kept a pig because he grew the feed for it, and we had bantams - horrible little things - and he grew his own corn and he used to have it made into flour, so much of it, you know...We did have a baker but mum used to make bread also. There wasn't much she didn't do really.(14)

Another respondent's mother had a family of eleven to feed on a labourer's wage.

We had a grate with an open fire, and we always used to have jacket potatoes in the oven, and we used to have masses and masses of soup. And the boys all used to do a paper round and they'd come in cold and starving and she always had the soup pot on, always. We were never hungry .. we used to have masses of suet rolls.

All the bakehouses in Broadway used to sell stale cakes. We'd take them home and soak them, add eggs, a bit of flour, put it in a meat-tin and bake it and then cut it into squares.(15)

A two-course meal was the standard for dinner. Puddings as well as first courses were filling and used as bribes to make the children eat all their first course.

We used to have a lot of stews. We always had a pudding. My mother had a great big round bowl, like a big enamel bowl. And we always had a pudding, a milk pudding. I remember she used to buy tinned milk. I mean milk must have been cheap enough in those days, but it saved the sugar I suppose. They used to buy this tinned condensed milk. I can always remember it. She used to order about eight tins a week. If we were clever we used to get the spoon and go help ourselves. And I mean she used to make a pudding with that. One day it was sago and one day it was rice, one day it was macaroni. And on a Sunday she had a big round dish .. and she used to make a tart, a custard tart or a fruit tart. It was sort of set. You knew more or less what you were getting, but I mean we accepted it.

And we used to have what we called spotted dick. You never got up from the table hungry. If we left anything on the first course, my father would say, "Well you don't want your pudding".(16)

Preparation of meals was time-consuming. Poultry had to be plucked and cleaned, rabbits skinned and cleaned, taking care not to tear the skin which was to be dried and sold. While the men snared or shot the rabbits, it was usually *their wives'* jobs to clean and skin them. Fathers would bring

home a rabbit now and then and that would make a meal, put in the black pot you know with potatoes and carrots and dumplings. Made a good meal. Sometimes a rabbit pie, you know. The rabbit skin man used to come round in those days, "Any old rabbit skins?" he used to call.(17)

Because the men were outdoor workers, they had to be well fed, and received the larger portions,

I know when we had a rabbit, I had the breast, my twin brothers would have the front legs, my mother would have the back leg, my father would have the back and another back leg. They always had the most because they went out to work.(18)

All village families, from the poorest cottager to the "nobs" with gardeners, grew as much of their own produce as possible. Most gardens contained fruit trees as well as vegetables. Even the baker kept an allotment and a pig, and his wife preserved as much as possible. "Mother used to always do pickled onions, pickled cabbage, pickled everything, and there were great big seven pound jars."(19)

Most women kept a few hens in the garden. Keeping hens was considered women's work, as was gleaning:

You'd see the old women after the harvest, they'd go down to the fields, picking up the corn - leeing they used to call it. Getting all the corn lying on the top that the machine hadn't picked up, for chickens.(20)

Virtually all the families kept a pig, which was an essential part of the family economy. In two cases where the respondents did not have room for a pig, the grandparents kept pigs and gave them meat. Some families kept a breeding sow, but most bought a piglet, occasionally two, in the spring to fatten for the winter. If two pigs were kept, one was killed before Christmas and one after. The poorer families often bought the runt of the litter, but one family was so poor in the early years that they couldn't afford to keep a pig. "We had it very, very hard. We used to have a bit of bread and dripping. You didn't know what it was to have meat."(21)

Often there was room for the pigsty in the garden, but sometimes they were kept "along the ground", on the allotment. This meant a long walk with the pig food. Mrs. AE's father used a shoulder yoke for his buckets,(22) in Miss BJ's family the girls took the pig swill in an old milk churn on wheels.(23) Possession of a pig was an investment, or as F. G. Heath termed it, a "live savings bank".(24) Miss BJ remembers

when her father was earning 28/- a week, a runt piglet cost 15/-. Some insured their investment by joining the pig club at the pub. This seems to have been a common precaution also in other areas. A Lincolnshire man, recalling the importance of the family pig in the decades before the First World War, stated that the "most important club in the village was the pig club".(25)

They used to insure the pigs and then if they died they used to have something out of the pig club. You see they used to pay every week and if they had a pig die it used to come out of the fund.(26)

These clubs pooled their resources to buy cheaper wholesale pig food.

It couldn't have cost very much otherwise my father wouldn't have been in it, and a lot of them wouldn't have been in it. I don't really remember very much about the rules and regulations, but I think all the feed probably came through the pig club but at a reduced price. It was called Sharps and it looked a bit like wholemeal flour, very brown, and I used to go to the sacks and eat it because it tasted good.(27)

The pig was also fed undersized potatoes and slops.

Anything uneaten went into the pig trough. Nothing was wasted in those days. The potatoe peels and the trimmed vegetables all went into the pot and were boiled up to feed the pigs.(28)

The killing of the pig was an important festive occasion. Some women reported a certain squeamishness, but most accepted the ritual as part of everyday life, and one which involved a lot of work. The butcher explained:

Home killing was always done when the temperature was low. You can't cure bacon unless the temperature is 40 degrees (F). If it's hotter, there's a great risk of it going off

and if it's very much colder, if it's below freezing it won't cure. You've got about 4 to 5 degrees leeway to play with.(29)

Mr. AO described pig-killing in Broadway,

There was a man from Childswickham who used to come. Certain time of the year you'd hear these pigs start to squeal. He used to come and he'd have his old steel and his gear and his knives and things. And three or four men would sit on this pig - great big ones they were too you know, about 13 stone. (Who used to cut it up?) He did. Bales of straw they'd put under them. And they'd lay it all out and they'd have to burn all the bristles off you see, and the chitterlings were taken out and they'd have the old pig stick which they used to put up inside them and it used to stay outside to drain blood and stuff away, and then they'd cut it up into pieces.(30)

The curing was done either in a salting lead or a wooden trough,

They'd have an elm board each side with pitch in between and they used to do one at a time you know. Put them in salt. Afterwards the bacons and the hams would hang from the kitchen ceiling. They'd go green. They looked awful. But it was a good thing when they did that. They'd call it, "it's gone richy", they'd say. You know how the smoke and that gets onto the ceiling, that's how they'd be you see, grey, green colour. It used to hang there for twelve months or more. It could last that long.(31)

There used to be a man come round with a big wagon, shouting out, "Salt." The blocks used to be big. We had to cut it up.(32)

Before the days of refrigeration the importance of a pantry was stressed.

We had a pantry in this house. It's surprising how you miss them..There was a big sort of marble slab in this pantry and we used to lie the pig on that and salt it.(33)

The hams were put in a muslin bag and hung up in the kitchen in a rack from the ceiling or inside the fireplace in the living room. Mould formed on the outside and had to be trimmed off.

We used to hang it in the house - chimney corner. Plenty of houses in Fladbury had a couple of sides of bacon and a couple of hams hanging in the corners there.(34)

Pig-killing was an important event.

From the end of October until March, pigs were being killed every week, and nothing was ever wasted. Saturday afternoon was pig-killing times. They were very gruesome affairs, of which I won't go into detail. Most of the village would turn out, and a lot of home-made wine was drunk. In fact the pig killers, who were locals, would be a bit tipsy before they started, so you can guess there were a few mistakes made, but we accepted it all as part of life. The pigs were killed on the Saturday and all the small joints and innards taken out. The pig was then propped up against a wall in the wash-house or shed so that it would set firm, ready to be cut up on Sunday morning. The hams and sides of bacon were then placed in salting trays in a cool shed or cellar, and salt rubbed into it for a week or two, then it was placed on racks on the ceiling of the cottages, or the bacon sometimes hung on the wall, "like a picture", and from there it was cut and used as you wanted it.

The pigs didn't cost too much to feed, as practically everyone grew half a ton or more of potatoes and the small and deformed ones, and all the household scraps and peelings were boiled up and put into a "hog tub" as we called it, which was a large barrel sawn in half. This with a bowl of barley meal a day was all it cost. Also when someone had just killed a pig they would save all their scraps and slops and give them to someone who was feeding one. So when a pig was killed, small joints and liver etc., was shared out with other families and in that way everyone had fresh meat or "fry" as we called it all winter. And with the bacon lasting all summer, the pig played an important part in our lives, and so with everyone keeping a few hens, we were able to live reasonably well.(35)

Wives and daughters were kept busy after the pig-killing. Nothing was wasted, although blood pudding, so common in the north, was not made in the Broadway area. The chitterlings were considered a great delicacy.

It's the intestines of the animal. They used to go in a big bowl of salted water....they had to go in there to soak, and then they were turned inside out and all this slime and nasty stuff - I forget how many times that had to be done, it was quite a long process. And then, if you'd got a tap, they used to put them on the tap... And everything was cleaned. And then they were plaited - looped and plaited - and then they were boiled. The stomach, the biggest part of it, that was stuffed with meat - bit like haggis - and that was considered a great delicacy. And nothing at all was wasted. And the fat casing, that incased the kidneys and bowels and things I think, that was all melted down for lard and then you could eat what they called the scratchings which was what was left when all the fat had been rendered out of it...Oh, rosemary was put in, in this lard. Homemade faggots were lovely..You get what they call the pluck, which is lungs, liver - oh, you put belly pork in and various herbs and onions, and what we called the caul which incases the intestines. You used that to wrap the faggots in, and arrange it in dishes and tins and bake it... My mother and I used to make them right up until she died six years ago.(36)

Home produced meat, however, had to be supplemented with butcher's meat, usually offal during the week and a piece of beef for Sunday lunch, which though a *luxury today was more* reasonable before the war. Mr. Hodge explained that a pound of best beef steak cost one shilling in 1920.

In spite of all the pigs being killed in Snowhill, there were about three or four butchers coming round. I believe they sold more in the summer months, as pig killing was a winter's job as the hams were used in the summer months. It's a funny thing but most of the menfolk would go out to choose the Sunday joint, but my dad would never go, he always said it was a woman's job. Some of the men would spend ages trying to choose the biggest piece of meat for the least money.(37)

Mrs. BC remembers Sunday with her grandparents further up the hill in Snowhill:

Gran and grandpy lived up above us and we used to go up there. They used to have a great big piece of beef, silverside, and we went up there for supper and we had to

read a piece out of the bible, and we used to have pickled walnuts and all the pickles and a great big piece of beef and we had a big round table. It used to be lovely. (A big piece of beef would be a luxury today) Well it didn't seem to be any bother, did it? (38)

While food bills - with the exception of bread - were not the big drain on the family budget for the working class in the village as in the towns, clothing was just as difficult. Arthur Gibbs commented that the children he observed going to church on Sundays at the turn of the century "are dressed with a neatness and good taste that are simply astonishing when one recalls the income of a labourer on the Cotswolds - seldom, alas! averaging more than fourteen shillings a week." (39) Women took pride in dressing their children as well as circumstances allowed. Most women had a hand or treadle sewing machine, which was a proud possession; many of them had saved up for a machine - and perhaps a bicycle - while they were in service. A lot of the mothers made clothes for their families, not only dresses, night-dresses, liberty bodices and other underclothes for the girls but breeches and shirts for the boys. All spent a lot of time mending and darning. Often grandmothers were described as "marvellous needlewomen" who helped out with the sewing and mending. Socks, pullovers and cardigans were usually hand-knitted, in addition most women could crochet. "Make-do and mend" was the philosophy which most women were forced by necessity to adopt. Mr. AD's mother "made a lot and we used to get a lot from jumble sales, and hand-me-downs." (40)

Mrs. BK's mother, busy in her baker's shop and tea room did not have time to make any clothes,

but there was always a lot of mending adoin and a lot of patching and darning. She used to make my dad's socks, I remember.(41)

Where women did not sew themselves, there was often a relative who did, and there was always the local dressmaker.

They were very few and far between, clothes. You had to be jolly careful. I can remember when I was 11 and I went to grammar school at Campden, we had to have uniform, of course, and I had to be mighty careful about looking after mine. We had to have white blouses. One of my half-sisters used to make them. She was quite a good needlewoman. There were several people who would make things for us. More than nowadays. There were lots of little dressmakers, you know, in the villages and so on.(42)

For the mothers of children who went on to grammar school, the provision of school uniform stretched their management of the family economy to the limit, and it can be understood why mothers did not encourage their children to take up a scholarship. It was not simply a question of loss of potential earnings.

I know me dad had about thirty bob a week when I started at the grammar school. So that was 1938. He only had thirty bob a week from grandad. 'Cause she's so proud of the fact that she bought all my school uniform on thirty bob a week. Well the school blazer alone cost more than a week's wage, didn't it?(43)

Mrs. AP's mother made most of her clothes. When her daughter went to grammar school,

Well we had no money so my mother made my gym slips, but some of the girls who were there, they had to buy the

blouses which were more than my bit of cloth. They were expensive items, weren't they?(44)

Mr. BF's mother was a professional dress-maker. She made "a lot of things" for the family, and made sure their clothes lasted almost indefinitely.

My brother - as I say he was in the butchering - and he used to wear breeches and stockings. And they always worked until about eight or nine o'clock in the butchering in those days, and he come home a bit late one night, and he said, "Mum, can you patch those breeches up for me please?" "Good Lord, Wallace you're almost asking me the impossible, there's no trousers left it's all patch!"(45)

Miss BI's mother was also a trained dressmaker.

They had to be apprenticed and had very little in those days, hardly anything I don't think. But she had meals there. (She made) dresses for me, school dresses, blouses and that sort of thing. It had to be spot on. She was very well trained. (46)

Clothes were not only passed down but "made over".

I had frocks made out of my aunty's nursing clothes - I used to hate that job. Nothing pretty, you just had to put up with something serviceable. You'd never say anything at home about it, you just kept it to yourself. There was nothing else to have.(47)

And my mother had a hand sewing machine. She's made hundreds and hundreds of pairs of trousers. People would give her an old coat, or she'd go to jumble sales, and she'd make them into trousers, and line them with old shirts.(48)

Clothes, lot were passed down. You had to. We had to use a lot of the girls' stuff. "I'll make that into a pair of trousers for you," she'd say, or something like that. Her hands were never idle. If she wasn't knitting, she was sewing or something like that, or repairing, darning socks and things.(49)

Clothes were passed down and well mended in Mr. AL's family.

His mother did a lot of mending, but he was proud that the boys

knitted their own socks. They had been taught to knit on four needles by Miss Campbell at Laverton School.(50)

Mr. AJ's mother made all his sisters' clothes. "They were all dressed the same"(51), as were Mrs. AG's sisters.

She'd cut anything up or buy a bit of material and make dresses for my sister and I, but, as I said, we were never poor, we were never dirty. She used to cut things down, and I can remember her cutting down for my brothers as well as for me and my sister. And she'd buy a bit of material and make our dresses. We had two blue dresses with butterflies on them. We used to dress alike.(52)

Mrs. AK's mother was an expert sewer.

She made all our clothes, for my sister and I. She did it mainly at night after we'd gone to bed, and she didn't have a pattern or anything. I mean I sew, but I always have to have a pattern, but not mum. (Did she used to make things out of other people's clothes?) Yes, she had friends in Birmingham that must have been quite well off, I think, and they used to send very nice things to her and she always unpicked them and turned them inside out, so that you had the new side up.(53)

She was awarded the highest accolade by an aunt:

She always used to say to mother, "I don't know anyone would think your kids were tradesman's kids the way you dress them". But you see mum was such a thrifty person.(54)

Most families had "Sunday best" as well as work-a-day clothes, but some of the farm labourers' families only had the latter: "Oh they never had us in Sunday clothes. We had working-day clothes for Sunday and all."(55) Mrs. BR complained of the soaking wet bedroom walls in their old cottage. When asked if their clothes got mouldy, she replied, "We didn't have enough; they were on our backs".(56)

Besides making-do and mending, mothers also saved for occasional new clothes. The church in Broadway organised a clothing fund to help. Clothing stamps were bought every week by the parishioners,

3d on a child's card, 1/- on an adult's. And then in October they used to pay it out and then they'd go to Evesham for the winter clothes, you see.(57)

Working class clothes in the country were less subject to the whims and fancies of fashion than those of the town. Like the whole way of life, it was slower to change. Mrs. BH moved to the area from Hull when she married in 1939. Her husband was born in Evesham in 1906.

Evesham was ten, fifteen years, behind what I knew in many, many ways. Particularly when I look at photographs of my husband and his brothers, you know, in knickerbocker suits and things like that, whereas where I lived people would be dressed quite differently - very fashionably.(58)

Nothing was wasted. When clothes were so worn that they could no longer be "made over", they were cut up and made into rugs.

All the old dresses and skirts, they used to cut them all up. She always used to do peg rugs. You divided your colours up. They didn't waste anything. Then they used to make the quilts with the little bits, the squares, and line it and make a bedspread and it was lovely and warm on the beds.(59)

Whereas mothers could make, alter, and mend clothing, shoes were a big item in the family budget and one which mothers

could do little about. Mothers were tempted to purchase for their children the larger sizes which would last longer.

A lot of children came to school with shoes ever so many sizes too big. Still that was better than being too small. There was quite poor children in the village, you know, and they used to have clothes given them.(60)

Men and children walked long distances. They required good stout boots to keep out the wet, and were hard on their footwear, "we were always wearing the soles out with so much walking".(61) It was father's job to repair the shoes. Most respondents remembered their fathers doing this.

Well me dad mended our shoes with old motor-cycle tyres or anything like that. He'd put a sole on them and he could sew them and do all those sort of jobs.(62)

Shoes were passed down in the family.

We handed down clothes and shoes - if they didn't pinch your toes they were all right.(63)

Unfortunately in some families shoes did pinch toes. In one family, with eleven children, shoes were passed down but had to be worn so long that they ruined their feet. All the family "had curled up toes".(64)

As the evidence suggests, it was a continual struggle for mothers to provide their families with sufficient food and clothing. The provision of both was time-consuming as so much - from meat and vegetables to clothing - was home produced. The amount of space in this chapter devoted to the keeping and killing of pigs and the storage of meat reflects the

importance of the pig in the families' food provision. The extent of the debts to the local bakers reflects the extent of the poverty of the agricultural labourers and the economic uncertainties of many market gardeners during the depression.

CHAPTER 5 - WOMEN AS MOTHERS. HOUSEWIVES AND MANAGERS
(e) CIDER AND WINE MAKING

It was not only food and clothing which were produced at home: many families made their own wine and cider. Oral evidence shows that while wine making was often women's work, cider making was the men's prerogative (as too was the consumption). Homemade wine and cider saved precious household money which would otherwise be spent at the pub. It was perhaps easier for women to control their husbands' drinking if it took place in the shed in the back garden: certainly women were reported as trying to maintain control, even in exasperation stooping to draining the barrel when their husbands were out. There was little room for entertaining in most homes, so the men entertained in the shed where the wine and cider was brewed and stored. This was strictly the men's territory and womenfolk were not invited. Sometimes, however, the "brewhouse" was located in the washhouse. Snowhill was reported as being "quite famous" for its homemade wine.

Most of the houses had a large outhouse, which we called a "brewhouse". This was usually shared between two to four families. It was really a washhouse with a large copper, but I suppose it got the name "brewhouse" because there was so much homemade wine brewed in it. And there was always one or two large half barrels of wine fermenting in there. Sometimes the odd mouse or rat got drowned in it, but it was just fished out and drunk just the same. Wine was made out of almost anything, and I know my mother used to make about six gallons a fortnight.

News soon got round when someone had a drop of "good" and you always had plenty of visitors. Sunday morning was the main wine drinking time. There was always a gang at our house when we had some on tap, and they would stand round

the barrel and draw it in quart jugs. I have known them drink it while it was still fermenting.

.. when a "whist drive and dance or a social evening was held in the village, there was someone knocking at your door all hours of the night. Quite a lot came from neighbouring villages, including Broadway, to sample our homemade. It was usually a very friendly atmosphere, but sometimes there were a few fights, when some of the younger ones had a drop too much.(1)

Mr. Hodge recalled that his "dad's favourite was parsnip, and he used to drink a lot". But wine was made of "all sorts, a bit of everything. Potato peeling, even tea-leaf wine".(2) Parsnip wine was the most frequently mentioned followed by plum, elderberry and rhubarb. Miss BJ's mother used it in her trifles.(3) *Mr. AJ's mother made parsnip wine for Christmas.*

Now's the time to make it, March, when they begin to shoot, and keep it till Christmas, and it's like whisky. It's strong, a couple of glasses make your toes turn up!(4)

In Mrs. AM's household, it was her father who made the wine.

They called it plum jerk'em - dad made that, and one of his mates down the road made dandelion wine. He made the dandelion wine just before the war...The whole gang of 'em they used to go and help these farmers to do the threshing and they'd conglomerate at one house drinking the homemade. They'd call it the "taming of the lion", but the lion won! ...And I said to my friend, "where's your dad?" She said, "Behind the dustbins, I expect, taming the lion". And I said, but your gooseberry bushes are moving, there's somebody crawling round. And she casually looked round "Oh it's him, I expect he's drunk".(5)

A lot of the homemade wine was very potent, as is suggested by its local name "tangletoes", for as respondents explained, "it would plait your legs". Mrs. BH was not sorry that the custom of making homemade wine disappeared in the war (it was impossible to obtain the necessary sugar), although, as a

publican's wife, her assessment may have contained some professional bias:

The great thing around Evesham was home-made wine. There was a family who came from Wickhamford and they were never sober before the war. They appeared to be stupid, but it was homemade wine. And we had a customer in Evesham who used to appear at six o'clock in the evening when we opened, and there was a brass rail in the bar, the public bar, and I've seen him put his foot on that brass rail and fall down. My husband used to say, "Noah, you'd better go, don't start.(6)

During the war the same man looked very smart.

I said, "Why has he changed?" and he said, "Oh well he can't get any sugar to make his homemade wine...It did him the world of good not having the sugar. But they'd do runner bean wine, wheat wine, parsnip wine, dandelion wine, elderberry, elder flower, you name it, anything. Well they used to put a lot of sugar in it, it was very sickly and very strong; make you ill some of it. Runner bean, that was disgusting.(7)

Families made their own cider and perry, sometimes known as "stun'em". Most families in the area had at least two or three cider apple and perry pear trees, some had a large orchard at the back of their cottage. Sometimes, like the outhouse and washhouse, this was shared between several cottages. The fruit was carted to the mill where for a small charge it was pressed. The juice was then brought back home in a barrel to ferment. There was a cider mill in most villages, often part of the pub as it was in Willersey and Badsey; the pub at Hampton was called The Old Cider Mill. Mrs. AH's husband supplemented his wages as a market gardener by the income from his cider mill.(8) Some mills used horse power, but often a large bar was turned by hand to press the apples. Like

the wine, cider was stored in the shed or cellar, if there was one, usually in 60 or 120 gallon barrels.

Cider, provided by the farmer, was passed around in the fields during hay-making, and threshing. Mrs. AI's father rented a farm. They had a special cider house behind the kitchen to store the barrels of cider. She remembers taking cider out in stone jars to workers in the fields.

It was my father's main drink, but he would never touch it until eight o'clock in the evening. He was very strict with himself. And he never smoked a pipe until eight o'clock. (So he didn't go down to the pub?) Oh no, I don't think he ever went inside a pub, unless, he probably did when he went to market, market day.(9)

Miss BI's father's winter drink was "some hot homemade cider on the hob by the fire with sugar in".(10)

Mrs. AS remembers her parents' arguments about her father's love of cider:

The cider fruit was picked in the orchard. Then Horace in his dray, or whoever was able, would take the pothampers full of cider fruit to the cider press at Broadway and they'd come back rejoicing. They would put it in the barrels, put a bung in the barrels and it was kept for so long, and then when it was tapped the men used to get so excited.

And my father had a drinking vessel. It was made from horn, and I don't think it was ever washed. And they had little stools and would sit round the barrel. Horace, who was dad's cousin, he loved his homemade cider and wine and he used to come and sit with my dad in the old stable and drink with him. My mother used to come out and she'd get really cross and she used to shout.

Horace was never really welcome, but he was lovely. And likewise dad would go down to Horace's house - the Hinton Road council houses - where he had a big shed full of

barrels..One day he was late coming home for dinner. It wasn't much, and of course Mum was waiting at the door, "Where have you been?" she said. "Your dinner's cold". He said. "Oh ah" - he'd never argue with her. She said, "I suppose you've been down to that pub again". "No", he said. "If you must know I've been down to Horace's place". "Oh aye, you've been boozing in that shed round the barrel." "No I haven't; all right," he said, "If you must know. I did have a drink with Horace at the pub. He asked me to go down with him and see where he's buried his funeral money in a tin underneath a plum tree in the garden. So," he said, "I had to go, didn't I?"(11)

Mr. AJ remembers his father's cider:

There was always a 120 gallon barrel in the shed for anybody to go and help themselves. And they used to have these old horns. I expect you've seen them, haven't you? ..They used to help themselves, the postman always used to help himself, but if you ever wanted *anything from Campden* you only had to tell him to bring it - from the chemists you know, all them little jars. Beside the post that was.(12)

Home brewing saved precious housekeeping money, but unfortunately the plentiful supply of cheap alcohol sometimes led to abuse which was a threat to the family. This subject is covered in more detail in chapter 7a.

Footnotes to Chapter 5(a) Marriage

1. Jeeves, (ed.) Warne's Everyday Cookery, (1898) p. 1.
2. Mrs. AB.
3. Davidoff and Westover, 'From Queen Victoria to the Jazz Age', Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words, (1986) p. 3.
4. Mrs. BM.
5. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) p.10.
6. Mrs. AM.
7. Mrs. BR.

8. Mr. BQ.
9. Mrs. BC.
10. Hodge, unpublished autobiography p.5.
11. Mrs. AF.
12. Mrs. AM.
13. Mrs. AN.
14. Mrs. AM.
15. Mrs. BN.
16. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) p. 335.
17. Mrs. AB.
18. Mrs. AE.
19. Mrs. BG.
20. Mr. AO.
21. Mr. AO.
22. Miss BI.
23. Mrs. AK.
24. Mr. AL.
25. Mrs. AB.
26. Mr. BF.
27. Mrs. BK.
28. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 4.
29. Mrs. AM.
30. Mr. AD.
31. Mrs. AR.
32. Mr. & Mrs. AC

Footnotes to Chapter 5(b) "Making Ends Meet"

1. Gordon and Breitenbach. "Women. Work and Sexuality", The World is Ill Divided, (Edinburgh 1990) p. 45.
2. Arch, Joseph Arch. (1898) p. 2.
3. Andrews, A Village Remembered. p. 9.
4. Ibid.
5. Miss BJ.
6. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) p. 14.
7. Mr. BF.
8. Mrs. AG.
9. Mrs. AF.
10. Miss BI.
11. Mr. BF.
12. Mrs. AP.
13. Mrs. AM.
14. Mrs. AG.
15. Mrs. AE.
16. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) p. 34.
17. Owing to the miserable wages paid the men they were nearly always in debt to the shop a week a-head - this system of dealing was called "one week under another," and it meant that the greater part, if not the whole, of the labourer's wages were spent each week before they were earned. (Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 78.)

For a man to be free of debt was the great exception and not the rule. At one meeting I asked the men present who were not in debt to the shopkeeper to hold up their hands, and when I looked there was not one single hand help up. (Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 100.)

In nine cases out of ten the bread bill had to wait clearance till harvest bounty when for about a month the man would earn about one pound a week. (Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p.101.)

18. Miss AQ.
19. Mrs. BO.
20. Miss Connie Burrows, unpublished autobiography, p. 3.
21. Miss AQ.
22. Miss AQ.
23. Mr. BF.
24. Mrs. BC.
25. Mrs. AS.
26. Mrs. AS.
27. Mrs. AG.
28. Mrs. AS.
29. Mrs. AB.
30. Miss AQ.
31. Mrs. AS.
32. Mr. BF.

Footnotes to Chapter 5(c) Women's Workplace, The Home

1. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 352.
2. Broadway Parish Council Records. Worcestershire Records Office. (The whole letter is quoted below)

Broadway Parish Council

21 December 1906

(To Clerk, Evesham District Council)

Dear Sir,

At a meeting of the above council held on the 17th inst. I was directed to forward you the following copies of a Resolution passed at such meeting viz:-

"The Parish Council of Broadway desire to bring to the notice of the Evesham Rural District Council the hardship which the working classes of the District are suffering from scarcity of cottage accommodation, owing in great measure to the extreme stringency of the Bye Laws now in force which, though perhaps well adapted in Towns, are unsuitable for Rural Districts and make it impossible for private persons to build cottages which they can let at such a rent as working men can afford to pay without being serious losers themselves. Also in the case of cottages condemned by the Medical Authority, owners are deterred from rebuilding them by the heavy cost and prefer to let them remain derelict. In Broadway the scarcity of cottages is very keenly felt and is caused not only by the stringency of the Bye Laws but by the buildings formerly occupied as Cottages, being taken up to provide larger dwellings, the former occupants being turned out; and also by the great expense of the new sewerage connections, which make it more to the advantage of an owner to pull down the cottages and build one house than to put the required sanitary arrangements into the cottages and let them at anything like a reasonable rent.

That a copy of the foregoing Resolution be forwarded to every Parish Council in the Evesham Rural District, asking for their support and also to the Local Government Board. And I was further instructed to ask you to bring the matter before your Council at the earliest possible date."

Yours sincerely

(signed) Ernest Nichols, Clerk

3. Brown, The English Country Cottage, (1979) p. 79.
4. Dr. William Savage, a Medical Health Officer. in his Introduction, Rural Housing, 1919, defined the housing problem in 1919 as follows,

The Position Before the War - Existing cottages are wearing or have worn out; economic causes prevent private enterprises erecting more in anything like sufficient and compensatory numbers; the Local Authorities will not build if loss is likely to fall upon the rates, and the powers to make them are ineffective; the State, through the Local Government Board, exhorts and stimulates, but provides no pecuniary help; the problem is being solved in each place in which it

arises by the migration to town or colony of some of the best of the agricultural working classes.

The Effects of the War upon Additional Cottage Building and the Repair of Existing Houses. - A few houses for the working classes were in course of construction at the opening of hostilities, and these have been for the most part completed, but during the whole four years of war, house-building has been largely at a standstill in both rural and urban areas.

Not only as Dr. Savage pointed out, was the rent received not sufficient to "make the building of good cottages directly profitable", but also to effect repairs to those existing. He was able to enforce his demands to remedy housing defects on the estates of large, wealthy landowners, but impoverished landowners, some of which owned whole villages, prevaricated. Even more difficult to pursue were the small cottage property owners, who had inherited or acquired rental property. These ranged from village tradesmen to poor widows. "Their point of view is that they are receiving so little rent that it does not pay them to carry out the necessary repairs". If the Medical Officer deemed the house unfit and recommended closure, he found that,

Often enough the owner goes, if a man, with indignation, if a woman, with tears, to his or her local representative and he with zeal voices the "hard case" at the Rural District Council meeting. The Rural Council does not wish to "devour widows' houses," and sometimes in their sympathy with the impoverished owner forget their duty to the unfortunate tenant.

Here, again, the fact that closure, the only legal course available, will probably mean shortage and possibly the provision of rate-aided houses may influence their judgment.

Dr. Savage reported that due to poverty, some of the owner-occupiers of rural cottages also pleaded they had no money to carry out repairs. (Rural Housing, William G. Savage, (1919) p. 126.)

5. Evidence of R.H. Rew to the Royal Commission on the Dominions, Parl. Papers, Vol. XVIII, Qu.2, quoted in Horn, Rural Life In England in the First World War, (New York 1984) p. 1.
6. Arch, Autobiography, (1898) p. 349.

7. Mrs. AF.
8. Green, A History of the English Agricultural Labourer 1870-1920, (1920) p. 289.
9. Mr. AL.
10. Mrs. BR.
11. Mrs. AS.
12. Knight, Cotswold Lad, (1960) p. 64.
13. Mr. AD.
14. Mrs. BB.
15. Brown, The English Country Cottage, (1979) p. 166.
16. Mrs. BR.
17. Mrs. AN.
18. Mrs. AS.
19. Mr. R. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 14.
20. Miss BJ.
21. Mrs. BN.
22. Mrs. AE.
23. Mrs. AG.
24. Mr. AL.
25. Mrs. BR.
26. Mrs. AR.
27. Miss AQ.
28. Miss AQ.
29. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 9.
30. Mrs. AS.
31. Tourist brochure on Blockley (ca. 1910).

32. Icely, Blockley through Twelve Centuries, (Kineton 1974) p. 144.
33. Tourist brochure on Blockley (ca. 1910).
34. Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism. (1985) p. 191.
35. Mrs. BR.
36. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 12.
37. Mrs. AK.
38. Mrs. BN.
39. Mrs. BN.
40. Mrs. BN.
41. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 12.
42. Mrs. AK.
43. Mrs. AG.
44. Mrs. AG.
45. Mrs. AG.
46. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, pp. 13-14.
47. Gibbs, A Cotswold Village, (1914) pp. 42-43.
48. Mrs. AS.
49. Mrs. BR.
50. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 2.

Footnotes to Chapter 5(d) Food and Clothing

1. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 212.
2. Broadway Parish Council Minutes, Worcestershire Records Office.
3. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) p. 32.
4. The Board of Trade surveys of the typical daily diets for labouring families in 1911 are as follows:

Gloucestershire:

Breakfast. - Tea. bread, cheese, butter; sometimes oatmeal; bacon occasionally. Dinner. - Bread, cheese, bacon, potatoes, and green vegetables; fresh meat once or twice a week. Sundays, fresh meat, vegetables, pudding). Tea. - Tea. bread, butter jam, Supper. - Tea, bread and cheese. As a rule, labourers keep pigs when stys are provided. Some farmers object to their men keeping pigs on the ground that the temptation of taking food for them is great. All the men have gardens or allotments. (Heath, British Rural Life and Labour, (1911) p. 67.)

The Worcestershire diet is similar:

Breakfast - Tea, bread, butter or jam. The men often have cheese and sometimes bacon. Dinner. - The men take tea, bread, cheese, and sometimes bacon or pork, or cold meat left over from Sundays. The children take bread, butter or jam; sometimes vegetables, and some bacon (on Sundays the family has fresh meat, pudding and vegetables). Tea. - The men have no tea as a rule. The children have tea, bread and butter, or jam. Supper. - The men take tea, bread and cheese..About three-fourths of the men keep one pig a year for fattening. They usually have good gardens, but no allotments... Some of the farmers give cider. (Heath, British Rural Life and Labour, (1911) p. 73.)

Nevertheless, some families still suffered from malnutrition. The Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1912 showed that 12.7 per cent of rural children examined were suffering from the effects of poor feeding. This figure, however, can be interpreted as confirmation that the diet was considerably better than in the towns. In West Hartlepool the rate was 31.4 per cent, and even in Norwich it was 26.3 per cent. (quoted by Pamela Horn, Education in Rural Eng 1800-1914, (1978) p. 261.)

5. Mrs. BR.
6. Mr. AL.
7. Heath, British Rural Life and Labour, (1911) p. 59.
8. Mr. BQ.
9. Mrs. AN.
10. Mrs. A†.

11. Mrs. BR.
12. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire Records Office.
13. Mrs. AR.
14. Mrs. AK.
15. Miss BJ.
16. Miss BJ.
17. Mr. AO.
18. Mrs. BO.
19. Mrs. BK.
20. Mr. AO.
21. Mrs. BL.
22. Mrs. AE.
23. Miss BJ.
24. Quoted, Burnett, Plenty and Want, (1966) p. 127.
25. Benson, The Penny Capitalists, (1983) p. 23.
26. Mrs. BR.
27. Mrs. AS.
28. Mr. BQ.
29. Mr. BF.
30. Mr. AO.
31. Mr. AO.
32. Mrs. AE.
33. Mrs. BN.
34. Mr. BQ.
35. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, pp. 8,9.
36. Mrs. LN.

37. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p.36.
38. Mrs. BC.
39. Gibbs. A Cotswold Village, (1914) p. 43.
40. Mr. AD.
41. Mrs. BK.
42. Mrs. AI.
43. Mrs. AH.
44. Mrs. AP.
45. Mr. BF.
46. Miss BI.
47. Miss BP.
48. Miss BJ.
49. Mr. AD.
50. Mr. AL.
51. Mr. AJ.
52. Mrs. AG.
53. Mrs. AK.
54. Mrs. AK.
55. Mr. AD.
56. Mrs. BR.
57. Miss BJ.
58. Mrs. BH.
59. Mrs. AE.
60. Mrs. AN
61. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 35.

- 62. Mr. AD.
- 63. Mrs. BR.
- 64. Miss BJ.

Footnotes to Chapter 5(e) Cider and Wine Making

- 1. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, pp. 11-12.
- 2. Ibid, p. 12.
- 3. Miss BJ.
- 4. Mr. AJ.
- 5. Mrs. AM.
- 6. Mrs. BH.
- 7. Mrs. BH.
- 8. Mrs. AH.
- 9. Mrs. AI.
- 10. Miss BI.
- 11. Mrs. AS.
- 12. Mr. AJ.

CHAPTER 6 - THE FAMILY INCOME
(a) MEN'S WORK

Oral evidence was examined to determine how low wages in agriculture for men necessitated women's participation in the paid labour force. The strategies employed to augment the family budget were central to the organisation of family life. While this is not a study of the agricultural labourer, any investigation of rural women's work without consideration of the income of their fathers, husbands and sons is impossible.

Women's income can only be considered within the context of the "family income" because the type and extent of their work was often dependent on that of their menfolk.

Most respondents came from families whose income derived either directly or indirectly from the land. Parity of earnings with workers in other industries has never been achieved by agricultural workers. The half century between 1890 and 1940 was a difficult period for agriculture though the poverty reported in this period was less desperate than that of the 1830s, '40s and '70s. The short "golden age" of agriculture in the 1850s and '60s had ended in the 1870s with the influx of cheap food from abroad, and farm labourers tried to organise into unions in self-defense. (See footnote 1.)

According to Joseph Arch, the men of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire were earning from nine up to twelve shillings a

week, with an average of about ten shillings in the 1870s, when "they were moving and meeting" for union organisation.(2) From farmers' accounts, wages in Worcestershire around 1890 varied from 12s to 14s per week.(3) Children and women are recorded as earning 6d, 9d, to 10d per day for haymaking, harvesting and pulling roots.(4) By 1907 the average wages for Worcestershire were approximately 17s 11d, 15s 11d being in cash and 2s in extras.(5) It is interesting to note F. G. D'Aeth's definition of such low-paid workers in his article, 'Present Tendencies of Class Differentiation', in the Sociological Review (1910) (see footnote 6). Rowntree noted that in only five English counties (all in North England) did the average weekly earnings of labourers reach the 20s 6d necessary for a rural family of two adults and three children to avoid primary poverty.(7)

By the turn of the century farming was no longer the major employer of men in Britain as it had been throughout the nineteenth century (see footnote 8).

Although agriculture revived from the low point of the 1890s, there was a marked increase in land sales in the last five years before the First World War, due in part to the threats to the landowning classes by the Liberal Government's taxation policies, and to the better returns in other investments such as railways, mining and government stocks, but

also to the memory of the slump in the late nineteenth century(9). While agriculture was given a further boost by the War, death duties contributed to the breaking up of many large estates, and the flood of land sales became a deluge. In 1921 the Estates Gazette reported that a quarter of England changed hands in the period 1918-1921.(10) Much property in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire was sold. This gave many market gardeners their first chance to buy their own land. Mrs. BR's father bought his three and a half acres in Childswickham from the estate of the squire, an absentee landlord who died in 1913.(11)

While some benefited from the break-up of the big estates it could cause problems for former tenants outside the jurisdiction of the Evesham Custom.

The cessation of hostilities at the end of 1918 brought great changes in Willersey. Chestnut House and the land that went with it during the old farming days - a portion of which was our market garden - was put on the market and we had to quit our land, there being no security of tenure at that time. We managed to buy a smaller field, which, though not being such good working land, had the advantage of being near the road. Mr. John Knight, now an old man, decided to retire and his farm was sold in lots. Some of his land was eventually rented to returning ex-servicemen.(12)

During the First World War, when workers were in short supply, wages rose considerably. German submarine warfare made it imperative for government policy to stimulate agriculture. The Corn Production Act of 1917 fixed a minimum wage for

labourers and District Wages Committees, consisting of farmers' and labourers' representatives, were established to set rates for local areas. These were not to be below a national minimum, established at 30s in 1918, 36s 6d in 1919 and 46s in 1920.(13)

The relative prosperity for agricultural workers and market gardeners was short-lived. In 1921 the Corn Production Act was repealed. Prices of corn dropped, the number of men employed on the land was reduced, and minimum wages were lowered from 46s to 42s. The slump which began in earnest in 1922 reduced prices of produce to slightly above or below pre-war levels, though costs had increased. By 1924 the average wage of labourers had sunk to 28s before the government reintroduced the National Wages Board and County Wages Committees. Wages then rose to an average of 32s.(14) Things became so bad for farmers that the budget of 1928 relieved agricultural land from the payment of rates. Harold Andrews reported that

The late 1920s and the early 1930s were difficult years - a period of unease and discontent. Perhaps it was that during the Great War people had enjoyed better prices for their produce and had enjoyed comparative prosperity. Now that was all gone. Soldiers away fighting had been promised a return to a land 'fit for heroes to live in'. Instead they found work scarce, unemployment, and precious little consideration. (15)

The Depression hit the local market gardeners of the Vale of Evesham especially hard. Even in good times their livelihoods were often precarious. They worked such long hours

for such a small return that they were known locally as the "white slaves", a term which had also been used to describe agricultural workers by Joseph Arch in 1898.(16) While the bigger and increasingly more mechanised growers managed to cope, the majority, trying to support families on three or four acres, lived from hand to mouth.

Childswickham, Willersey, and all the way around, the majority of the families and that were supported by the husband having about three, four or five acres of land. They were all small market gardeners, more or less done by hand, you know. They were white slaves. All hours of daylight during the summer months and all like that. And the same in the winter, they used to dig the lot, and they were supported that way, but of course things got so bad in our market gardening that they couldn't just survive so they used to go out and get a job and that was it.(17)

Mrs. AS's uncle belonged to the larger and more successful mechanised gardeners:

He could afford a motorised hortoculto - I reckon it was the forerunner of the Merry Tiller. He could afford one and he could do more work and he did well. He had four children and they weren't hungry.(18)

But her father belonged to the more widespread group which struggled to support their families on a few acres of land,

Everything he grew went to market, went to Evesham. It was taken by a carrier. There were several carters in the village. Horse and drays. And they picked up the produce at a certain time on the day of the markets. Well, sometimes the produce that was taken wasn't sold, so there was no money. I mean there was a dump, a fruit and vegetable dump, at the market. But the produce that was sold was paid from the market through the post by cheque. And I know they waited every Monday or Tuesday or whatever for the cheque to come, but if the postman didn't come with a cheque they knew that the produce wasn't sold. You see, nothing was certain.(19)

Even when produce was sold, small market gardeners, like Mrs. BR's father, with just three and a half acres, had a difficult time. He was, by necessity, a very thrifty man whose motto was, "Spare at the mouth of the sack. It's no good sparing when you get to the bottom".(20) His daughter recalled that

We had to sell produce at such a price that it didn't hardly pay for the growing of it... We all had to muck in together and just managed to keep going during the Depression. It recovered a bit after the Depression and then it recovered quite a bit during the Second War.(21)

Comments such as "They never knew what they were going to get for it" and "Sometimes they paid more to have it picked and cut than they'd get for it"(22) expressed the uncertainty of market gardening. Mrs. AP's father "had to go and mortgage standing crops".(23) Overheads were also high.

You had to pay commission to the men in the market up in London and pay for the containers, hampers and whatever, and sometimes you wouldn't get any money at all if it hadn't fetched very much. By the time they'd taken out the commission and the charges, the freight charges, there was hardly anything left sometimes. I can remember runner beans especially, you know, about 9d. we called them "pots", you know hampers, what was there? about 20 or 40 lbs.(24)

Mr. BQ concluded,

In the Depression I would rather have been doing something different. Lot of hard work for nothing. As it is we stopped on in it and there it is. The bad depression in the thirties was terrible. You couldn't sell anything. We managed to get through I suppose.(25)

Some families did not "get through" and had to part with their homes.

I don't think I told you how my parents came to part with their cottage, and that's important because when my grandparents lived in Mill Cottage they owned it. My parents were married in 1921.... and when the depression

came things were very, very bad - terrible....things became so bad that the Gloucestershire County Council at that time were almost canvassing for smallholdings. They knew the state that people were in and, of course, it meant that a lot of people couldn't keep their properties in repair, couldn't afford it. And this particular year, which I think was probably about 1931-1932, my parents sold to the Gloucestershire County Council for £200. It had been in my mother's family for years. That was how it came to go out of their hands, and then the Gloucestershire County Council gave them a life tenancy, and they did it with several small-holdings in the village and around, and of course it was a life-saver, especially for people with properties like Mill Cottage which were wattle and daub and thatch.

...The council not only bought up some of the smallholdings, but they bought up the 'Rookery' on the Murcot Road - 22 acres I think - that was split up and the people who had sold their houses, their smallholdings, to the council I think they were all given the chance to rent so many furlongs at a very economic rent to make up a living for them. You see the council were being very good. Not only did they take these tumble-down places and keep them - they only did the minimum repair - but they also had the land to make a living on. I think we had about three or four furlongs, and then dad also had some land down in the middle ground, down on the Hinton Road. It wasn't enough to earn a living, but it was enough that one could cope with a fork and a hoe because he worked with hand tools. And also the middle ground, that was let to a lot of the men in the village trying to earn a living.

...With my father being on his own he wasn't as well off as the roadmen, because the roadmen had a regular wage. It was ever so difficult and I don't look back with any rancour, or certainly without any feeling of, "Oh, they could have done better" because I know jolly well they couldn't.(26)

The Smallholdings and Allotments Act of 1907 had authorised the County Council to acquire land, if necessary by compulsory purchase, for the provision of small-holdings. In the Depression such council schemes were necessary. Mrs. AR's brother took a small-holding at Eckington.

That was when it was council, and the council would put a house up and you'd sort of pay the rent. That was under the Depression.(27)

Most market gardeners were willing to turn their hand to anything which would earn them an extra income. Village men, whether small farmers, farm labourers, or smallholders were proud of being "handy" men. A few gave up the land and went into the building trade as labourers. Many who later turned to market gardening had started life as farm labourers or carters. Sometimes they continued to work for others as well as tending their own allotments. Many supplemented their income by seasonal work for farmers, such as harvesting and threshing. The more successful and enterprising had a range of jobs.

Mr. BQ's father kept 30 to 40 hives of bees. He advertised his Victoria and Egg plums in the Church Times which brought him customers as far away as Scotland. He saved to buy his own land by being the village factotum.

He was a sort of village - I don't know what to call him - he done it all. He was sexton and verger at the parish church, he was on the parish council and rate collector. Each village had its own collector. And he did the pig killing. Nearly everyone then had their own pig and he used to go around to kill the pigs. He did all sorts of things.(28)

Mrs. AR recalled:

My father was a market gardener and he was also post master of Cropthorne and kept the village stores. He had his own land and we had a cow and a pig, you know, self-supporting...

My father bought the land. His father put him into the land, but he had to pay Squire Holland, there was a squire those days. He had to pay it when he could afford - so much you know...So we were bought up very strict and we all

had to work. We had to work hard. It was very hard times. We never went hungry, and we never went ragged, but it was hard times. (29)

Later her father was one of the first in the district to own a lorry to take his produce to Evesham market. This too brought in a little extra money.

He used to put two seats in. He made a top himself, he was a clever man, and put a sheet over it and he used to take the people into Evesham to do their shopping. He got a little for that. And he also used to take the footballers around. Before that he had a horse and dray... and he used to go and collect a load of scouts to come and camp over at Newbury and Fladbury.(30)

Mrs. BG's husband and father-in-law were market gardeners in Broadway. Her husband worked for his father and later took over the land.

It was council land, rented, council. There were land agents, you know, used to let it out to people. And there was a thing called the Evesham custom. 'Cause the land agents came from Evesham and they used to handle that...If the person who was renting the land died, the person who was left it afterwards had to pay the family so much for the crops which were on there.(31)

But besides renting council land, the family had a piece of land of their own on which they had a cider mill. "Jack's dad used to make everybody's cider...there was plenty made. They come from all 'wickham and all round."(32)

Market gardening was back-breaking, labour-intensive work.

The lot of the smallholders was not easy. The land they managed to acquire had been farmed for generations. Ploughing with horses had left a hard 'pan' down under. This had to be broken and the land drained. In those days there was only one way to accomplish this. It had to be dug by hand. The first digging was extremely arduous work,

but with perseverance they brought the soil into a good state of cultivation.(33)

The crops included peas, beans, cabbages, cauliflowers, sprouts, spring onions, parsley, strawberries and other fruit. Many growers saved their own seed and developed their own strains. These, it was claimed, were more disease resistant being more suited to the local soil and, therefore, able to thrive without the pesticides which need to be applied today.

They used to have to save their peas and their beans for seed. My dad had his own strain of sprouts in the end, because he seeded his own, and he used to let them all go to seed and then he'd thresh it out. It used to lie in our shed and every little bit would be saved and he'd have his own strain of sprouts. It were a lovely sprout. It was a mixture of one or two together that did it, and he had a good strain.(34)

The most prized crop, however, and the one on which the economy of the family often depended, was the asparagus crop. Asparagus from the Vale of Evesham was much in demand. It was known locally as "sparrowgrass", "asparagrass" or simply "grass".

If you wanted something new, "You shall have it when the 'grass' comes in". If you wanted new curtains for the house or a new dress. Because that was the chief crop.(35)

We all had to work hard for what we had. Because we often used to send stuff to market and we didn't get anything for it, yes quite a lot. I wouldn't say asparagus, that always sold well because that used to go to London, but local stuff often didn't sell...Once you got asparagus planted, you see, it used to last for years and years. Had to wait three years. But then they used to get jobs another way. They'd have to get a living. They'd work for any farmer. Threshing, or cutting corn, all that sort of thing they used to work on...That was the only thing that kept you going, was the asparagus.(36)

Mr. BF recalled that "Everyone wanted the 'asparagrass' out of the Vale of Evesham. It was supposed to be the finest in the world, you know." His aunt and uncle made the wicker "flats" (baskets) for the asparagus, which was bundled in hundreds. "They grew the osiers and made the baskets. It's a willow, these osiers. If you've got a big of boggy ground anywhere you can't go wrong with 'em."(37)

Asparagus cultivation required a substantial capital investment because the land was taken up for three years before the first crop was harvested. Rust infections could wipe out a crop. The disease became epidemic in 1904-06, and scores of acres had to be ploughed up.(38) New strains were later introduced which were more resistant.

Seeds were planted in the spring. The following spring the roots were transplanted into their permanent position. Two more years elapsed before the crop was ready, but then it was expected to last for twenty years.

However, just when they seemed to have become established, disease appeared and the crop failed. There was little, if any, scientific knowledge then and no one to turn to for advice.(39)

Some of the families interviewed had grandparents who had had quite large farms. But farming in the 1920s and 1930s, like market gardening, was depressed. "When the last war broke out they said they'd never let farming get down into such a state of deprivation as what it was".(40) Some had to run other businesses or do contract work to help support their farms,

some failed. Miss BI's father was forced to give up his farm at the top of Broadway Hill and move into Broadway where he became a carter.(41) It was also common for the sons who did not inherit the land to go into carting. Mr. BF's father, for example,

done the carrying between Broadway and Evesham. If you'd got anything to be transported from Broadway into a market or something of that nature. He had a van and a pair of horses. 1911-1920 years, you know. And he also brought the money for the banks from the Evesham Bank.

...You see his father kept the farm on the left hand side up in Buckland, t'was quite a big farm, and they used to do contract work as well, such as threshing. Two teams of horses. One took the steam engine and one the threshing machine, because in those days, you see, steam engines weren't mobile in the early days. And when they did get them mobile they used to pull the threshing machine behind them, see, the steam engine pulled the thresher. It used to take eight horses to move the thresher and stuff in those days; two teams.

...He used to do a bit of contract work with the horses - ploughing and jobs like that. This gentleman that kept the farm all around here, Mr. Whitehead, he used to do a lot of work for him, ploughing and various jobs, you know.

...I mean the way he used to do his work. He used to do contract mowing, you know, for hay-making. And when he'd done the fields, you know, it was just as though it had been shaved. All round the outside. That one cut around the outside like as they start now and it's wasted, nothing's done with it. He used to have you rake the last swath out so that he could get the mower into it the opposite way and he'd go right back round the opposite way and cut it. Two horses and a mowing machine. He used to start about half past three in the morning and he mowed till about twelve o'clock, and then he'd give the horses a rest and have a couple of hours sleep himself, have some food, sharpen the knife....Then he'd have another bash in the evening. He'd probably knock off about ten o'clock at night. You see you could do it in the cooler parts of the day. It was no good driving the horses. You had three horses and you changed them. You know, change the one and put a fresh one in, and then change the other, like that. (Do you ever remember your father being out of work?) Very

much so - well, not so much out of work, but getting no money for it.(42)

Mrs. AB's father rented a 120 acre farm in Blockley from the Northwick estate, which owned much of the village and the surrounding land. He also ran a carriage and later car hire firm to take people to Moreton station and on trips. He was ticket agent for the Great Western Railway. Her mother had a shoe and boot shop.

He had a farm, a small farm and he had hackney carriages, horse carriages, and then cars and buses...They had a brake..a big thing like a big wagonette, only it seated probably ten, twelve, maybe more... he was always employed, not very gainfully often, but employed... Life was pretty hard really, and farming, of course was a dead duck in those years. My father used to say the one business had to pay for the loss of the other one.(43)

The poorest members of the gainfully employed in the villages were the farm labourers, the grooms and the gardeners, though these were skilled jobs and hours were long. In the period 1900 to 1910 their wages had failed to keep up with the inflation rate of around ten per cent.(44) Farm labourers often turned their hand to many kinds of work from gardening and grooming to quarry and building work.

Nobody was out of work much. Course they didn't get big wages. I started at 9s a week and it went up when I was married to 29s 3d. You had 30s, and ninepence stopped for insurance.(45)

Mr. Hodge wrote,

When I say "poor" I mean very little money..wages those days were 30/- a week .. that meant working over 50 hours a week, and out of that most families had to pay about 3/- a week rent...Most of the villagers worked on the land, but a few were gardeners and carpenters, also quarry workers

and grooms. But the basic wage was about the same. Most of the men could use a scythe and cut grass or corn as short as a lawn-mower does today.(46)

Miss BJ felt that farm labourers' skills were not acknowledged.

They used to look down on farm labourers, but my teacher said that, although they didn't know it, a farm labourer was very, very knowledgeable and educated, because he was put to all sorts of jobs - hedging and ditching, draining, looking after animals. On Sunday morning he used to go round here up to the farm and collect the bales of hay, two on his back, and walk up the steep hill to feed the cattle.(47)

Up until the Second World War the rate of introduction of the tractor was slow. There were less than 5,000 tractors in the UK in 1925 and 55,000 by 1939.(48) Ploughing with a team of horses was skilled work. In Snowhill at the turn of the century they still used oxen.

I used to go out every morning and help me brother with them oxen, and saddle them up for work. Up at Spring Hill. They're better 'an horses and better than tractors. They used to drop some good stuff on the land. You haven't got to get 'em shod you see. I used to go out every morning before I went to school and harness them, put a collar on them. (When did they stop ploughing with oxen?) Soon after the war (First World War) wasn't it?(49)

Wages were dependent on the weather. "Wet time" was unpaid.

Our daughter, Margaret, was born on November 19th, 1928. I think it was the following year that we had an unusually wet season. In three successive weeks I earned five shillings, two and sixpence, and fifteen shillings respectively, and we began to get into debt. Minimum wage then was thirty shillings with loss of wet time. Towards the end of the summer, I managed to get sixteen weeks' employment with a building firm, which was a great help for I received £2 a week for this.(50)

In the Vale of Evesham, surrounded by hills, skill at draining was of prime importance and could earn a labourer extra income and status. Mrs. BR's grandfather, for example,

did a bit of everything. He was a very clever man; he was mostly clever at draining. They used to come for miles to ask him for different things and he'd tell 'em if he thought he would. The village was more flooded then than what it is now.(51)

Mr. AD's father was a groom and later gardener at Snowhill Manor. In order to support the family,

He worked all hours - different jobs at nights, weekends to make some money. He did all sorts of jobs. He caught rabbits and he'd sell 'em, help the farmers hay-making at nights and all sorts of jobs.(52)

In order to obtain a tied cottage when he married, Mr. AL took employment as a groom. In addition to being poorly paid grooms worked long hours.

I took this tied job at Temple Guiting. Mr. Scott got me the job and I went up there for Major and Mrs. D'Arcy. I worked up there for three years, then the wife got fed up with it because I didn't get home until late at night. Grooming, horse grooming. She was hunting every day of the week bar Sunday, and I'd got some cows to milk as well. I was at work at six o'clock every morning, some mornings I was up at five. She used to be late coming home from hunting. We had to fetch her horse back because there wasn't horse boxes in them days you see. She'd 'phone up and say where she was and the chauffeur had to fetch her back and take you and you had to ride all the way. You often didn't get back till seven o'clock. We had a long day. When I went there we were paid 29/3d.(53)

Farm labourers' families, like those of market gardeners and farmers, "lived off the land". They kept allotments, a pig, and often hens, and caught wild rabbits (and sometimes

pheasants). Mr. AC was such a good shot that he was in the Black and Tans after the First World War - "a marksman in the Troubles, the shooting." The family enjoyed a pheasant and he would go down to the woods. "I'd go down there ten o'clock at night and get a bird out of the trees"(54).

The oral evidence bears witness to the general poverty of the respondents' families. Low wages and hard times in agriculture were reflected in the accounts of family debts to the shopkeepers. (See Chapter 5b.) The strategies employed to augment the family budget were central to the organisation of family life. Without the additional contributions of wives' and children's earnings and the very skilful management of the family's meagre resources by the housewife, village families could not have survived.

CHAPTER 6 -THE FAMILY INCOME

(b) MARRIED WOMEN'S PAID WORK - DOMESTIC AND CARING

In this chapter oral evidence is examined to determine the extent of married women's paid labour. Despite the ideal progressively fostered throughout the period of the husband earning a family wage and the wife devoting herself entirely to her children and unpaid domestic duties, it was found that the families of the respondents relied on the help of the women on the land, in family businesses, or their earnings toward the family budget. Apart from field work and shop work most jobs were an extension of women's domestic labour for their families: sewing, cleaning, cooking, washing, and caring for others.

Only one example was found where the man of the house explicitly endorsed the new principle that married women should not work outside the home. This was at the end of the period. Mrs. BD had worked in her father's flower and vegetable nursery and was skilled in making bouquets and wreaths. Her husband worked at Gordon Russell's furniture factory in Broadway. He had been apprenticed and it is significant that he was not employed on the land but was a skilled workman earning a better than average wage. He firmly promoted the new ideal. His wife stopped working when she married in 1937.

He wouldn't have let me. He objected to women working...Jack objected very strongly. He always said that was the start of the country going downhill, children

coming home from school and nobody being home. He always said that.(1)

Unpaid domestic work within the family, however, was acceptable within the new dogma.

My mother had died. My sister got married and my mother died suddenly the next day. And I got married and looked after my father and two brothers. and an apprentice, and my husband.(2)

Mrs. BD's mother-in-law was widowed when her children were still young. She was forced to work to support her family, but confined her work to the home.

(Her son) was only seven when his father died. Eight brothers and one sister. Well his father was estate bailiff for Lord Gainsborough at Campden - at that time they owned most of Campden - and she had a house big enough to rent rooms. She used to have two men, paying guests.(3)

She must have been a good economist because when her son was apprenticed at Gordon Russells her daughter-in-law reported,

His mother paid for him to be learned there. He was the last one that was paid for...She had to pay £50 for him to be apprenticed.(4)

Married women who had been in service often continued domestic work as "dailies". Mr. AC's mother helped in the kitchen at Middle Hill, a big estate near Broadway where his sister-in-law was cook.(5) Mr. AJ's mother returned to her old employer on a daily basis.

Well she went to Tudor House and helped out there..Well, it was where she worked before she was married..Cleaning, and then cooking. When the cook was on the day off she done the cooking.(6)

Mr. AL's mother also went cleaning and helped the cook.

She done all the housework, and her used to go out cooking. She done the cooking at Buckland Manor, she also went a-cooking in Little Buckland for Mr. Bill Scott, and then when he come up to Laverton House she done cooking up there, and she also worked for Lady Victoria Forrester, a-helping with the cooking. If they were short, she'd go. And she was caretaker at the school for 20 odd years, cleaning the school up here. (So she always worked?) Oh blimey, yes!(7)

Three mothers and one grandmother were reported working as "untrained" midwives, general nurses and odd-jobbers. The importance of such women has been researched in Mary Chamberlain's Old Wives' Tales.(8) As they also laid out the dead, their services were required at both the beginning and the end of life. Formal training in midwifery was introduced in 1902 and with its extension in 1916, 1924 and 1937 middle-class professionals gradually replaced the poorer untrained locals.

Whereas in 1911, 83 per cent of all midwives were either married or widowed and 70 per cent were aged over 45, by 1931 the comparable percentages were 52 per cent and 48 percent. The midwife was ceasing to be an older local resident and was becoming a younger, probably middle class, professional. Certainly traditional practitioners with little formal education were squeezed out.(9)

Perhaps the increasingly professionalised birth attendants could have learned from the down-to-earth experience of such village women, for it is significant that despite professional ante-natal care and the increasing use of hospital facilities the rate of death in childbirth did not fall and during the 1930s it even rose slightly.(10) Elizabeth Roberts felt that many working class women preferred the "untrained" midwives:

In the earlier decades the provision of qualified midwives had been very uneven, and women did not always have a real

choice. But there were other reasons too: unqualified midwives were cheaper; they were generally thought to be friendlier, and less "starchy"; and they were certainly less likely to tell the woman what to do, being more likely to co-operate both with her and her female relatives. It is an example of working-class women rejecting the invasion of their homes and lives by the professional.(11)

Miss BJ's mother, born in 1886, had 11 children, and Mr. AO's mother had nine: their own practical experience of birth would seem to have made them eminently suitable for the task of helping others. Certainly the local doctors did not object to their aid. The need for a more compassionate, if less official approach is underlined by the minutes of a meeting of the Broadway Nursing Association in 1904, which recorded the passing of a resolution stating, "No unmarried mother shall be attended by the village nurse."(12) (See also footnote 13.) The two midwives, who lived opposite each other, were "great friends"(14) and shared their territory. Mr. AO remembers his mother:

She used to do lots of odd jobs - midwifery and laying them out for a funeral and that sort of thing. She used to have one side of the road and then the people on the other side they'd have one. That's how they went about it, like that...I know you used to hear them, a tap on the door. "Somebody for mother!" Seven and sixpence, I think for a delivery. (How often would she be called out?) Twice or three times a week I should think. In the middle of the night, no lights or nothing. And she used to go to people's houses and do a bit of cleaning and things like that, you know.(15)

Miss BJ, whose mother served the other side of the road, recalls:

It started by helping neighbours you see, and then it sort of snowballed. She'd sit up with sick people or people that were having a baby. She'd have requests from the local doctor - all hours of the night.(16)

Maurice Andrews wrote of his mother,

There are women in the village today who will recall how, when in childbirth, though very grateful for the doctor, they were happier to know that Mrs. Andrews was in attendance. In those hard times most cottages were without the necessary amenities for such work. Kettles had to be boiled and most of the lavatories were outside, often at the end of a very long, muddy garden path. The majority of people prepared for such times, having the usual requirements at hand, and this helped my mother in her task, but there were others who made no such provision. Yet others were downright disgusting. In one case, I remember, Mother was called to deliver a baby and before she would let the doctor into the room she had to send to our home for her own clean sheets to replace the filthy bedclothes the expectant mother had produced for her.(17)

Over the years Mother assisted the doctor and the undertaker and, later on, the district nurse, many hundreds of times. All this in addition to bringing up her family, writing letters and filling in forms for whoever cared to knock on the door for help.(18)

In addition her daughter recalls her mother taking in washing and plucking fowl for extra money. One Christmas she plucked 75 birds, taking 9d for a turkey and a goose, 6d for a brace of pheasants, and 4d for a fowl. She made eiderdowns and pillows with the feathers.(19)

Mrs. AK's mother had been a cook before she married. After marriage, "Mum used to do extras. She used to do anything to make extra money". She too helped babies into the world and people out of it in her village of Bretforton.

If anyone was ill they'd come to her, and it didn't matter what it was in sickness. She always wanted to be a nurse. (Did she help with deliveries?) Yes, and deaths. (Do you

know if she got paid for that?) No, she did it as a friend, you know, she didn't ever take money - was never offered money, I wouldn't think. People hadn't got it. You would be paid in kind, if anything. Know what I mean? You would be given something that you needed.(20)

As this did not seem a very lucrative business, her mother's hand sewing machine was put to good use.

Another thing she used to do to make extra, she was a good needlewoman and she used to sew, make shirts for the monks at Broadway. And she used to also make the raffia mats. I don't know what they did with them all, but she used to make them. (21)

Mr. AL's grandmother worked as an untrained midwife in Buckland and laid people out.

They wanted her to be a proper registered midwife, but my uncle Joe wouldn't let her because she'd be called out at night and all that you see.(22)

In addition, like many village women, she took in washing.

She'd do washing for people and she hadn't used to charge very much. She'd got a furnace and a tin bath joining the house with a tin roof. She used to do loads of washing. She used to do it for gentry as well. She loved washing. Her done it until just about a week or ten days before her died. (She was over 90 when she died.) My wife used to help her do this washing.(23)

Sometimes the money earned by a job like washing was used for a specific goal. Mr. AC's grandmother, "a proper hard-working woman" was a field worker, "but I know she said she done washing for 18 months and then bought a big corner cupboard for the money".(24)

Work was usually a necessary expedient to support the family rather than to buy extras. Mr. Harold Andrews, with a

new daughter, had little income in the winter of 1928 because his wages were docked in the wet season,

The following spring Dorothy decided to try and get a family's washing. Looking through the advertisements in the Evesham Journal she read, "Lady Maud Bowes-Lyon, Broadway, requires the services of a hand laundress. Dorothy applied and soon Her Ladyship arrived. "My laundry would be more than you would manage alone, Mrs. Andrews," she said. "Do you think you could get help? What about your husband, would he help?"(25)

Here the rigid gender divisions of labour were being flouted, and the reaction and solution of the problem is interesting:

Dorothy thought that wouldn't be considered proper. "Why?" her Ladyship asked, "Men do the laundry on the Continent." And so I agreed to try my hand at laundry work. Steadily I rose from kitchen rubbers and cotton sheets to linen sheets and table linen. Now Dorothy was free to concentrate on fancy work. Gradually we paid our debts and then bought more equipment. First a wringer and new baths, then an ironing stove. This was a capital little iron box contraption in which we kept a coke fire. It used to get red hot when filled. Ten irons were held in a rail round the sides and back and on the top. With the stove red hot and a galvanized corrugated iron roof facing south, it was pretty hot work during summer. *Hanging out the washing* when the wind was north to east and during frosty weather was a mighty cold job in winter.

Drying too was a problem in fog and rainy weather, but the little stove did wonders in that direction too.(26)

Mrs. Andrews built up a good business until the outbreak of the Second World War brought soap rationing and her mother-in-law became ill and needed her care. In Women's Work and Wages, Cadbury commented that such washing "was not conducive to home comfort". While the actual washing process took place in the brewhouse, the "ironing and much of the drying took place in the small family living room, causing a hot steamy atmosphere, which is trying for the family".(27)

Mr. BF's mother in Broadway was a professional dressmaker. She owned a treadle sewing machine which was put to good use.

She used to employ three girls. 'Cause in those days you could have a little job at home you know, there was no tax to it. She worked hard hours. Worked hard hours, especially when something big was coming off at one of the big houses. She'd be making this dress and that dress... And some of the big houses in some of the other villages just around. There used to be some people in the big house just as you go into Stanton, on the right hand side, Grant. And it was a family I think of about three girls and two boys. And when these dresses and that were made I used to have to go on me push bike and deliver them, you know. (Did she have a special sewing room?) She used the front room in the house, what we called it. (Do you know how much she was paid for making a dress?) Somewhere about 25s, something like that...Used to have an old Singer pedal sewer you know. Used to have to do a bit of maintenance work on that now and again. "Needs a bit of oiling", she'd say, "That machine's a-going hard." (And what did the girls do that she employed?) Well various jobs you know, helping out on whatever was in production. (And she taught them the trade?) That's it. (Did she get paid for teaching them?) No. The youngest girl used to get about half a crown a week, something like that, and the ones which were older, say about 17 or something like that, would get about 5s a week. (How many hours did she work?) She'd make a start, you know, breakfast and that, seven o'clock in the morning and then she'd be on till ten o'clock at night. And the amazing part about it all is the things they could do in those days you know with just a small oil lamp, sewing, threading needles and all that you know. (It must have been hard on her eyes?) Well, I think it got to a point of what you were used to. Because there was no real strong lighting anywhere. I mean a lot of people in the houses used to run on a candle - just a single light candle.(28)

When things got very busy, the neighbour would help.

She'd warm the irons up for mother when she'd got a lot of ironing to do with these new garments and that. It was a completion of an order, because in these big houses in those days, there'd be a new dress for you, a new dress for you and probably four or five you see.(29)

Broadway, with Russell's factory and the growing tourist trade, offered good opportunities for women to take in lodgers. In addition to her sewing, Mr BF's mother used to take in lodgers, usually young men working at Russell's Furniture Workshop.

Out over the back kitchen, that was converted into a bedroom. And you used to have to get to it by going round outside and up some stone steps - it was the granary in years gone by."(30)

Miss BI's mother was also apprenticed as a dressmaker. She and the grandmother also took in lodgers.

I think sometimes she had a regular man like a man who worked at Russells or something like that and visitors weekends, perhaps weeks... (How many bedrooms were there?) Four. Three and a very small one which was (later) made into a bathroom. I think granny, when she had people here, she had a sort of bedchair she could put up in here (the kitchen) for herself.(31)

In addition to running a tea-room and helping in her husband's bakery and grocery shop in Broadway (see chapter 6e), Mrs. BK's mother also took in lodgers,

We lived in the rooms above the shop, and we used to let some of the rooms. This big room. You see my mother and dad, well, my mother and dad had the landing. It was a very big landing, you can tell, it was big enough for a big double bed, so that we could let some of the rooms because, of course, to make money. What was it, 4s 6d for bed and breakfast, wasn't it? We let to tourists and cyclists a good bit as well. And they used to have meals when my mother used to cook every day. She'd cook quite a lot and when the cyclists come along there was always an odd dinner they could have, you know - even her own she'd give away. (She must really have been busy with seven children.) Oh yes, we were ... (How many bedrooms did you let?) There was always the back room, two could sleep there, and the very front room, two could sleep there. So four people in any case, 'cause we needed the others you see. There was the big bedroom in the middle, that took two big double beds, that took four

people if you wanted, then two in the back, then the other one at the side and then the landing. Well, it was three bedrooms and the landing you see. We only took in what was spare like.(32)

Domestic work was the most common way women made extra money. It used the training women had received from home, school and service; it did not flout the gender roles of the day, as it was merely an extension of the caring role assigned to women within their own families. Some of the work, such as washing, could be carried out in the women's own homes; other labour, such as unofficial midwifery, nursing, and charring, still confined women to the sphere of the home, although it was not their own. Although paid domestic labour flouted the ideal that married women should not work outside their homes, the middle class promoters of such doctrines were dependent on the labour of working class women and such work was therefore accepted by all classes.

CHAPTER 6 - THE FAMILY INCOME

(c) MARRIED WOMEN'S PAID WORK - GLOVING

Worcester was the principal centre of the gloving industry, outproducing the Yeovil area of Somerset, the other important centre.(1) While male cutters in the large factories of Dents and Fownes held "particularly powerful positions in the labour force and were paid to reflect this"(2) there were far more women employed in the trade than men, for each cutter supplied up to 15 sewers.(3) In 1908 more than two thousand country outworkers were listed as well as a similar number within Worcester itself.(4) But already hand sewing was dwindling. By the end of the nineteenth century, as is demonstrated by the census material and confirmed by oral evidence, with the increase in mass production techniques, gloving had become a very localised occupation. J. L. Green wrote in 1895 that hand sewing was "*much diminished in the last twenty years owing to replacement by machinery*".(5) Oral evidence was analyzed to determine how important the traditional local industry of gloving remained and why this had become confined to only a few of the villages studied.

The women and girls who hand-sewed the gloves at home were poorly paid. It was a pressurised job which would "get your fingers really sore"(6). However, glovers could earn enough to give them a certain independence, even if that was not compatible with the role ascribed to women in the nineteenth

century. (See the comments on gloving in the Commissioners' Report on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture 1868-9 in the Survey of Research, Chapter 1.) While at the turn of this century, few could still question the morality of the glovers, their independence remained a factor. This 'independence' however was qualified. With the exception of widows, only one Childswickham glover in the 1891 census was reported as heading a household. She was a mother with an illegitimate daughter, and both were glovers. All other unmarried glovers lived with relatives, usually their parents, their mothers usually also being glovers, but sometimes with grandparents, aunts and uncles. Five unfortunate former glovers, a spinster aged 65 and four widows whose ages ranged from 38 to 74, were inmates at the Evesham Workhouse when the 1891 census was taken.(7)

Childswickham and Willersey were the centres in this area, although Badsey, Wickhamford, Laverton and Fladbury were also mentioned. Childswickham's dominance is clearly evident from the 1891 census. Out of a total population of 400 (206 females), there were 64 employed as full-time gloveresses, their ages ranging from 11 to 64. Many were daughters living at home, while others were wives of labourers or widows. In comparison, Broadway, with a population of 1,536, reported only 25 gloveresses, including ten in the traditional gloving village of Willersey which was included in the Broadway census.

Of the remaining 15 gloveresses in Broadway itself, twelve were either born in Childswickham or had a mother born there. Badsey, with a population of 745 (364 female), contained only seven gloveresses, three of whom had lived in Childswickham.(8) Mrs. BC from Snowhill remembered that only one or two did gloving there, but that "Childswickham was the place". Most of the women in Snowhill worked in the two or three big houses or on the land.(9) Oral evidence confirmed that Broadway contained only a few glovers, although it is only two miles from Childswi kham and 1 1/2 miles from Willersey. It also confirmed that Broadway glovers often had family connections with Childswickham. It was suggested that the absence of large houses offering domestic employment in Childswickham and Willersey may well have been a factor.

Well they were a better class of people lived in Broadway. All the nob's lived in Broadway, didn't they? Better class people. There were lots of big houses there, weren't there? They'd work in gardens and staff in houses in Broadway a lot, didn't they? You see there wasn't the big houses in Willersey as there was in Broadway ... the women would be working in the houses.(10)

Almost every house in Childswickham used to do the gloving. (Why Childswickham and not Broadway?) I don't know. All as I ever knew about was down in Childswickham. And here again you see it was a source of income, so much a dozen pair. Work from home. This was their sideline down there.(11)

Mr. Sid Knight, born in Broadway in 1898, wrote of the importance of gloving in the village of Childswickham:

Here before she terminated her brief schooldays my mother learned to become a glover, a country craft that was in its heyday when I was a lad. In those days, when there was more hard fare than "welfare", it was often a godsend to a poor household, especially when as so often happened the

breadwinner was down through sickness or accident, or laid off through wet weather or slackness of work. Then the glover's busy needle worked overtime.(12)

The gloves, cut to shape, were delivered in bulk to a "bag woman", who then parcelled out the work between the outworkers to be sewn together. Though a specially adapted sewing machine, with a wheel instead of a foot, was often used in areas of West Oxfordshire,(13) there remained a fashionable demand for high quality hand-sewn gloves and it was this hand-sewing in which the village women of this area specialised. The girls learned the skill from their mothers.

At first you couldn't make a glove. We'd just put the thumbs in and sew up the side seams first - that's how we started. And eventually you got to put the fingers in, you see.(14)

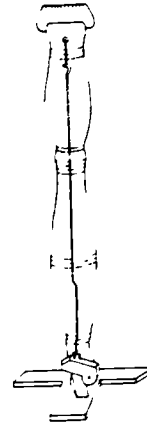
The gloving donkey was a vice in which the glove being sewn was held.

The sewers used a special pedal-operated vice known as a "donkey" for holding the leather. The sewer stitched through its serrated jaws in order to maintain the uniform twelve stitches to the inch which was required.

It was a queer-shaped but simple contraption.. The frame at which my mother sat and worked for tens and thousands of hours during her lifetime consisted of a round wooden upright, standing about three feet high. This was sunk firmly into four star-shaped spars. Within easy reach of the glover's foot was a stout treadle from which ran a stiff wire to the top of the frame. Here it was secured to a brass jaw about four inches wide, set with teeth of toothcomb fineness. Pressing the treadle opened the jaw, thus enabling the glover to insert the finger, wrist or any other part of the glove for stitching the seams. Releasing the treadle made the two parts of the jaw spring together like a rat-trap. The material was then immovable while being stitched. This was done with a needle of exceptional

fineness, each stitch worked by pushing the needle through each tiny cut in the brass jaw. The work was hard on the eyes, and long before her marriage my mother was compelled to wear glasses, in common with all other glovers.(15)

The "donkey" in which the glove was held while being hand-stitched. Height approximately 78 cms. (16)



...When the cottage industry of gloving was first started the firm lent the frame to the glovers, but later on new recruits had to buy their own, and a good one (the quality varied) cost ten shillings, which was exactly my grandfather's weekly wage as a farm labourer.(17)

In order to protect their hands, the women and girls who were engaged in gloving did not work constantly in the fields, though most helped in the summer. Rough hands made the work difficult.

My mother did the gloving before she was married and after. All the women did the gloving. There was two who took them into Evesham to meet a man by one of the pubs. They didn't get a lot for it. but I've no idea how much. I didn't do much gloving, hardly any. I was out on the land.(18)

Jennie Kitteringham writes about the health hazards:

The closeness of the work, the shining of the brass machine, and the unchanging position were not conducive to good health - bad eyesight and stooping shoulders often resulted besides the illnesses caused by sitting in a stuffy room for hours on end.(19)

The chief of these illnesses was tuberculosis. As early as 1861 the high incidence of the disease in the Yeovil area was blamed on the extensive employment in glovemaking in small unventilated rooms.

The work day passed in these rooms is a very long one - commonly of 12 or 13, frequently even of 14 hours - spent sedentarily, and in many cases with the further evil of a constrained stooping posture.(20)

In 1864 the Rev. G. R. Dallas Walsh, Curate of Evesham, complained in the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission of chest problems amongst the glovers in Evesham and the surrounding parishes.(21)

Mrs. BR and her eldest sister spent most of their time working in the fields, but their younger sister, Belinda, "did the gloving"(22) with her mother, cooped up indoors in a small damp cottage.

My sister did the gloving in the winter. Kept the house going on it. It was all hand done, you couldn't use a machine. They were on a frame. Nearly everybody was gloving.(23)

Both mother and daughter contracted tuberculosis. Belinda died in 1914 at the age of 24, leaving a husband and a blind eight-month old baby son. Her mother was more fortunate. She contracted the disease later.

Two or three in the village died of TB. I don't think there were any sanatoriums in 1914. My mother went to a sanatorium in 1924. They cured her.(24)

Mrs. AS reported that her mother was often ill with "these 'gyny' problems". but she still did gloving as well as helping with the harvesting and the fruit picking,

She did some gloving when her health permitted. She had a donkey. I well remember coming over to a dear old lady, Mrs. Lumley, in Atkinson Street. She took all the gloves in from Dents and they used to come in bundles. It was my job after school to call for the gloving. It was always a Monday afternoon, and the money - which was only about a few shillings a week - was tied in the corner of this dark red cloth, and I can see it now. When I took it home. My mother did depend so much on those few shillings. And when she opened the bale, she'd say, "Oh no. not pigskin!" because pigskin was terribly hard. But if it was doeskin, "Oh good, I've got doeskin". I was very young then, but it does stick in my mind. Doeskin and pigskin was one of the chief topics of conversation. "Oh I had pigskin and it did go hard." My mother didn't glove all day like some did. She'd probably do about half a dozen pairs maximum a week.

..And then it was a difficult job. You had to sit hunched over this gloving frame and you needed good eyesight. And don't forget the lights. We had a paraffin lamp before the gas came, but even so the gas light wasn't very good for close work. Most of the women sat in the doorways in the summer, where the light was good, and gloved - or near the window. Our Mill Cottage wasn't very light at all. It was difficult in the winter.(25)

Most villages were not supplied with gas lighting until around 1935, and most, with the exception of Blockley and Broadway, did not have electric lighting until after the Second World war. Gloving was easier in the summer.

When I was a child all these doors were open and these ladies were sat outside with their donkeys. They brought them (the gloves) on Monday and fetched them on Friday.(26)

Glovers were up as soon as it was light.

My aunty did it. She used to wake me up at four o'clock in the morning with her machine going. Oh yes a lot of people in the village did gloving. She did it for Fownes in Worcester. And she had this old donkey machine. I think she used to do them on the donkey and then she got so used

to keeping the stitches so even she did them by hand.(27)
Remember that big shopping basket they used to take it down
in - the week's work? Dreadful pay, dreadful.(28)

Mrs. AN's mother was married in 1892. She was a full-time glover both before and after she married, though she worked on the land in the summer time as well. Mrs. AN left school at 13 in 1917 and joined her mother glove-making. When she started the going rate was about eleven shillings for a dozen pairs.(29) The rate seems to have remained fairly constant in this period as Mrs. BL remembers her mother being paid 1s 1d. a pair around 1922.(30) This was not a lot of money for the amount of work involved, but was a considerable help to the family income. Mr. Harold Andrews, born in 1898, writes that before the First World War, "A good glover could earn nearly as much as her husband whose average wage at this time was around fifteen shillings weekly".(31)

Well, men's wages were so low in those days - they only got a few shillings a week. (Did you buy the gloving donkey?) Yes, I think we had to buy them gloving frames, yes. (How much were they?) I really don't know because mother bought that sort of thing. They weren't new ones, you see. they were passed on from one to another. (When you left school did you ever think of doing anything else?) No, because in those days you either had to go, what they called, into service - well, I didn't want that, mother didn't want me to go - or the gloving. I didn't want to be away from home in service. In those days the servants weren't treated very good, were they? And they didn't have very good food, so I've heard, anyway. There weren't many girls out of this village that went into service. (In Broadway they did). Well, they didn't do the gloving in Broadway, I don't think. Only one or two people. Now Willersey, I think there were some people there that did gloving and Badsey people did the gloving.(32)

Like Mrs. AS, Mrs. AN remembers the difficulty of sewing the harder leather:

Dents we worked for and then - I don't know for what reason - but gloving was very short and I can remember a man, don't know if it was just before I was married or just after I was married, (1924) he brought this work. He had a van or something down by the (telephone) kiosk and you had to go down there to get your gloving. It was terrible hard work. It was what they called buckskin. Well, you couldn't get the needle through it. It broke the needle. It was terrible. And then I think Dents must have started up again ... But Dents they did have some occasionally that were hard, but taken on the whole they weren't too bad. (Could you do enough for your keep?) Well, we had to make it enough. We didn't earn an awful lot. It took a lot of hours to make a dozen pairs of gloves. If you were quick, you could make a glove in an hour, but that was good going, but if they were harder, you see..(33)

Mrs AM remembers her mother gloving in the 1930s.

Some weeks my mother would have twenty-five bob if she'd done pigskin. It just depended on how many pairs you'd made. I can remember when I was a girl I'd say, "Oh let me do some of the quirks", (the small triangular piece of leather inserted at the side base of the thumb) and she'd say "No, because it's pigskin". And then she'd give me a little bit of stuff and I'd go backwards and forwards. And I remember her finger would be ever so sore. And the needles used to break in the pigskin. They were a job to do. It was hard on the eyes...we didn't have the electric until 1952.(34)

Though gloving remained an alternative to the other traditional employments of field work and service until well into the 1930s, it had become very localised. By the introduction of clothes rationing and by opening up alternative and more lucrative factory employment, the Second World War put an end to gloving. Mrs. BM's unmarried aunt was typical of many village women.

My aunt did the gloving and she lived at home and looked after her parents. Then she went to Leedons and worked in the factory during the war.(35)

CHAPTER 6 - THE FAMILY INCOME

(d) MARRIED WOMEN'S PAID WORK - FIELD WORK

Oral evidence was sought to determine how much labour married women continued to contribute on the land. Women and children had always participated in fieldwork. The 1867-8 1st Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture reported the extent of their participation in the 19th century. They sorted potatoes, picked stones from the fields, picked 'twitch' (the roots of couch grass), spread manure, hoed, set potatoes, weeded, singled turnips, made hay, harvested, planted potatoes, gathered mangold wurtzels, turnips and parsnips.(1)

By the turn of the century contemporary commentators present a somewhat contradictory picture of the extent of women's employment, but adhere to the Victorian view of its undesirability (see chapter 1). Mr. Wilson Cox, in a Board of Trade report (1907), noted that the employment of women and children had declined in the early 1870s and 1880s and had "almost entirely ceased in many districts", but he added that women are still engaged in such outdoor work as hoeing, weeding, picking stones and potato-lifting as well as hay and corn harvesting. He viewed this practice as "becoming less common every year, owing to the difficulty of getting them to undertake such work".(2) Mr. Heath, writing in 1911, quotes a commissioner having "truly remarked" that

There is not the same order in the cottage, nor the same attention paid to the father's comfort, as when his wife remains at home all day. On returning from her labour she has to look after her children, and her husband may have to wait for his supper. He may come home tired and wet; he finds his wife has arrived just before him; she must give her attention to the children; there is no fire, no comfort, and he goes to the beer-shop.(3)

Despite society's pressure, women continued to work on the land. In the First World War there was an abrupt switch in government policy and women were actually officially recruited for land work though this changed when the men returned. Women's work was casual, cheap, unskilled, often seasonal, and sometimes, as in market gardening, undertaken for relatives, so it did not often appear in the census reports. B. Seebohm Rowntree's survey How the Labourer Lives (1913) reports the wives doing many outdoor jobs to help pay for clothing and boots and to pay off the family debts. These include potato picking, stone-picking, leeing, and mangold-weeding.(4)

In the oral survey, many of the older women could remember their mothers working long hours on the land. They present a totally different picture of these hard-working women from that presented by the Victorian Royal Commissions, and one more in keeping with the observations of Maurice Gibbs, who in his writing at the turn of the century noted, "The Cotswold women obtain employment in the fields at certain seasons of the year; though poorly paid, they are usually more conscientious and

hard-working than the men. (5). As market gardening spread to the area, many women were employed in seasonal work, especially hoeing and fruit picking. Mrs. BB, born 1900. recalled her mother's work.

She'd do any kind of work. She'd work harder than a man. They had to in them days to get a bit of money. (What did she do?) Oh anything on the farm - hoeing, thistle cutting. When we were in the First World War she worked in Springhill Gardens (a large estate). Same as I did. Anything with vegetables. (And what did she do with you children while she was working in the fields?) We were working along. That was our best medicine that was, hard work and solid food. We never had no illnesses in them days.(6)

Some young girls went into land work straight from school (see chapter 4b) but after the *First World War this became less* common. Mrs. BR worked on the family smallholding. She did heavy digging as well as weeding and picking. Her grandmother was employed lifting turnips, a very heavy job.

In the winter we had the digging to do, 'cause there wasn't much ploughing attached to it then. I've got a bad back now, the devil's wore out! ..I used to go and pick for others - 3d for 5 lbs of broad beans, that was how we used to manage when we were short of anything.(7)

Many married women and children worked on the land part-time, especially in market gardening,

Girls went into service and then worked on the land after they were married as a part-time job. Wages were low, terribly low..you see labour was easy to obtain.(8)

Many combined several part-time jobs, both land-work and domestic, to eke out the family income. Younger children were

taken along to the fields in their prams. Older children were taken along in the holidays to help. Often mothers were still in the fields when children returned from school, "I can remember coming home from school and having to go, what we called, 'along the ground' to my mother. I used to hate it." (9) The post office in Cropthorne had little trade during the day.

Most of the women helped in the fields all day. There weren't many men who owned their own bit of land, so they had to work for the bigger firms you see...most people in the village were out at work so probably they couldn't get to the shop until half past four or five o'clock. (10)

Most of the women in Badsey worked on the land. While women did the digging in families which were short of men, it was more usual for a division of labour by gender and for women to do

the sort of jobs that women do - pea-picking, onion tying - they still do...they didn't dig, but they did most of the hoeing. The men did the heavy jobs. There wasn't ploughing then they had to dig. It was a very hard life. (11)

Because women were constantly bending in the sun, it was necessary to wear sunbonnets to protect their necks and faces from glare and sunburn. These bonnets were going out of fashion after the First World War though many could remember them.

Lot of women on the ground used to wear those white bonnets. Lot of women wore those to keep the sun off them. And they used to goffer them. They used to starch them and they used to goffer* them. (*to crimp in ruffles) They looked very pretty when they were clean. When they're really done up they're beautiful with all the goffering. (12)

Some women, like Mr. AC's mother, preferred a more serviceable men's cap which dispensed with washing, starching and ironing.

She nearly always had a man's cap on. She'd got the proper working clothes on. She used to work out in the (market) gardens and all like that. She was a proper hard working women.(13)

During the busy asparagus-cutting time, women were out early.

I used to help cut the asparagus, help to tie it..We were always up very early. We have been up as much as four o'clock in the morning when it was very hot because you had to cut it while it was cool, you see. And then you had to bring it down to the sheds, tie it all up and then the men used to bundle it all up into big bundles, wash it and pack it and get it off to London.(14)

Often the men cut the asparagus while the women tied them with withy-twigs and packed them.

They were done in hundreds.. and there were so many hundreds one way and so many hundreds the other way. They were tied with withy in the hundreds. Dad used to have the withy come specially for it, or if he was stuck he'd go down and get some out of the brook.(15)

Oh my mother used lots, hundreds. I can remember them now. They really did look lovely.(16)

She used to spend all day down there in the hut..Dad went down there five and six o'clock in the morning to cut it. Mum went down later, after we'd gone to school and tied it all into bundles and then it used to go off to market.(17)

Mrs. BN's aunt, like some of the men, gave up working on the land to become a private gardener. The council had bought up her land so she was forced to look for alternative employment. While women's labour in the fields was accepted by

local if not by middle class mores, private gardening was men's work. Such breaking of rigid gender divisions was punished by ridicule.

She was a great character. Well, she went to live with her daughter. They had the stores in Broadway... Well, aunt Rose was a great gardener. Well, when she sold up - well you see the council, what do you call it? Compulsory land purchase. Well you see it so upset her that she sold her house and went to live with her daughter. Well, she did the garden up there, and then one day a man said to her daughter, "I've come to speak to Mr. Swan". So her son-in-law went up the garden and said, "Rosie, there's a man to see you". Well, she duly went to do the garden for this man, and her fame spread in Broadway so that she had more than she could cope with. And she used to go up and down Broadway with this wheelbarrow and all her tools in it and dreadful old wellingtons and clothes - so her daughter felt quite ashamed of her. She was 70-odd. She was a wonderful gardener.(18)

With hard physical work, a family, and sole responsibility for domestic work at home. it was often commented that the women worked harder than the men.

When. you see, they came off the land they still had to cook the family food. they still had all the washing and the ironing and the looking after the children to do. The men had no part of it, or at least very little. They didn't help in those days.(19)

Oral evidence bore out that in the market gardening area of the Vale of Evesham, women continued to work in agriculture, especially after marriage. However, as Karen Sayer pointed out, because the work they did was "casual, cheap, seemingly unskilled and often undertaken for relatives" it was not

recorded at a time when "labour was defined as such only if regular and skilled". (20).

CHAPTER 5 - THE FAMILY INCOME

(e) MARRIED WOMEN'S PAID WORK - SHOP WORK

In this chapter oral evidence is analyzed to determine the importance of the village shop and to find out how many married women ran their own or their family shop.

The period 1890 to 1940 saw the heyday of the village shop. This was brought about by the growth of the industrial economy in towns and the distribution of goods throughout the country by the railway network. New cheap factory-made household goods replaced those formerly produced by village craftsmen. Village women married to tradesmen, such as butchers, bakers, newspaper agents, worked in the family shop, but it was found that many who were married to men employed on the land also had their own little shop. The "front room shop" was a popular means by which women could earn money and yet manage their home and family. Molly Figgures wrote about Blockley, which in 1921 had a population of 1,778.(1)

Blockley was once a thriving village with all the amenities one could wish for. For instance, I believe we had a representative of almost every trade in the variety of shops, including what I would call "Front Room Shops", for the simple reason that if a person had a front room that was not needed as such, it became a shop, and one could get almost anything in the village, either from the larger stores or the "Front Rooms".(2)

She mentions two large grocery and drapery stores, a confectioners, two butcher's shops, a saddlers, a cobbler's, three bakers, two coal merchants, a general store, a boot and

shoe shop, a china shop, a sweet shop and enterprising "back-door" shops, for example, Mrs. Liz Pain sold home-made faggots, home-cooked chitterlings, and plucked poultry; Hilda Pain sold home-made mint and aniseed sweets; and Mrs. Hayward and Mrs. Tarplett sold home-made ice-cream.(3)

Mrs. AB's mother was the woman who kept the boot and shoe shop Molly Figgures mentions. She was the only shopkeeper who had served an apprenticeship, though this was in the drapery business not footwear. Her husband farmed and had a hackney carriage business. They lived and had their shop in what had been the grandfather's bakery. Like most of the shops described, this one was not entirely specialised. As well as boots, shoes, slippers and laces,

They sold things from the farm, you know, eggs and fruit in season. And they were agents for the Great Western Railway so there were always people in and out enquiring about trains. (That must have been a good business then.) Well, I don't think it was actually. No it really wasn't very good. But it was a case of you'd got to keep a shop or office or something going for the numerous enquiries. We weren't the only people. You see there were a lots of shops then. (So your mother was mainly in the shop?) Yes and cooking and cleaning.(4)

Because transport was difficult for most of their clients the village shops and delivery services had a captive clientele. Even small villages were able to support at least a post office and a general store. The shopping facilities of

Little Comberton in the 1920s were compared with those of today:

Lots of people in those days didn't have a bicycle, they had to walk more or less. If they wanted to go into a town shopping they'd go by carrier's cart. Villages were more self-supporting with their shops and post office. And of course everybody had their own veggies and they had a pig. And they would deliver from the shops. In fact in this village we had far better service than we have today. We had a shop which was a post office and a baker. And we used to have Wards, used to come with a great big van and you could get anything off him - soap and powder and if you wanted a new bucket, or bowl or broom, a big hardware stores. And a butcher called two or three times a week. A baker came every day to deliver the bread. The paper boy used to come from Pershore to deliver the newspaper before he went to school. He used to cycle from Pershore twice a day. And he would do any errands.(5) If you'd got a prescription you wanted, and we've got nothing now. We haven't even got a shop. You've got to go to Pershore for a stamp even.(6)

The customer expected personal service. One respondent's grandfather would drive up to the grocers in Broadway in his horse and cart.

He used to pull up outside one of the shops, and call. 'Miss'. He didn't reckon to get out of his cart .. and he'd shout, "Miss", and he used to give his order and they'd bring it back out, and then he'd go and have his whisky in the Lygon Arms.(7)

Even the tiny hamlet of Saintbury had its own shop.

There was a little shop at the bottom of Saintbury and an old lady, in her eighties when I was a child, kept the shop. She wore long black skirts to the floor and long, long drawers. They were open all down the middle. Funny because we loved getting down there. She sold paraffin and she sold everything. And she didn't ever wash her hands, and it didn't mean a darn thing to us in those days. Honestly, she'd go from groceries to paraffin and never wash her hands.(8)

When Mrs. BC's father, an agricultural worker, was crippled with arthritis, her mother took over the small general shop in Snowhill from her parents. She just made ends meet. They made little money because "people hadn't got much money to spend". The shop sold:

Everything. Shoes. My mum broke her back getting up. She didn't know for 40 years. They used to hang the shoes up on the ceiling, the boots and things, and she got up to get one down and fell down. And we used to have the bacon on the racks and when we had Snowhill Wake people used to come up at half-past six in the morning to get a piece of bacon for their breakfast ...And then Harrisons used to bring the bread up in a horse and cart and put it on a sheet in our house and everybody used to come and fetch it.(9)

Mrs. AR's father was a market gardener who had "picked himself up" and bought a post office and general store in Cropthorne which his wife and daughters ran while he was working on the land.

My mother was a busy woman. We all had to work. She managed. Of course it wasn't so busy then as it is today, although it was quite a thriving little post office. All licences, gun licences, all pensions ... people used to combine the post office and their bit of groceries together you see. We had quite a big shop. My mother did all the buying and the accounting. Because when you ordered for the shop in those days you had a month's grace. You didn't have to pay for it as you do today. When the salesman came again you got your bill and your money ready. We used to do all sorts of things. Make faggots and all sorts of things to sell in the shop. We sold our eggs and vegetables in the shop. It was a good business.

And afterwards, when we wanted to release the shop a bit, I suppose we girls were growing older, we had a telephone exchange. I manned it quite a bit because I was interested in it.(10)

Broadway, like Blockley, had a good selection of small shops.

There were plenty of shops which supplied everything which was needed. Two good drapers where you could buy dresses, suits, hats, bed linen, wool and material; two good men's shops, two shoe shops, a good iron mongers, five good grocer's shops, three bakers, two butchers and a chemist - all in the street. People used to come into Broadway from all the villages around on their bicycles to do their shopping.(11)

Like many other shopkeepers, the baker took advantage of the number of shoppers' bicycles by placing a sign above their shop, "cycles stored 2d."(12) Miss AQ's father was a baker in Broadway. Her mother worked in the shop.

My mother worked hard. She was in the shop, always in the shop. And she said that when they first started - they lived over the shop on the green - it was just the time that the station was opened and she did a lot of trade, she said, with the Irish navvies working on the railway. My father used to make all these buns and lardy cakes. And he used to make something called "Nelson". It used to be on big trays. It was a pastry with a sort of bread pudding with a lot of fruit. And they used to cut it up *and the* men used to come in to buy Nelson.(13)

The bakers were amongst the more successful tradespeople and employed a girl to help.

My mother always had a help. When she first went to the shop and I was two years old, she had a girl called Ethel. She left school at thirteen and came to work for my mother. I think when she first came she had half a crown a week. I think later on she rose to five shillings, and she stayed with us for years.(14)

Mrs. BK's father was also a baker in Broadway. Her mother ran a tea-room as well as a bread and general grocery shop, and was kept busy cutting up "platefuls of bread and butter". She

worked a six and a half day week. taking the half day on Broadway's early closing day, Thursday. In addition, as mentioned in chapter 6b, she took in lodgers.

The tearoom was always full, and the shop. Oh yes, tremendous trade. Icecream, they'd go mad on icecream. Because in our shop where we kept the grocery and the fruit we got one great big icecream fridge. We used to make the icecream. Oh yes we made it with icecream powder and milk with a spot of red on the top. My dad used to stand out in the back turning it. The ice used to be brought round, slabs of ice.(15)

Next door, Mrs. BK's grandmother kept a greengrocer's shop in her front room which supplemented her grandfather's income as a shoe-mender.

Because of the poverty of many of their customers, shopkeepers were faced with the recurring problem of credit and trying to collect old debts. This problem was mentioned frequently by those who ran small village shops or bakeries, and has been considered in depth in chapter 5b. Some of the customers paid the baker in kind.

Well, do you know we wanted a bathroom and there was a little bedroom.. It was done by a man who had a wife and children living in the village. He did painting and decorating and what have you and he owed us so much money for bread and he put the bathroom in for it..

And then there was a dressmaker, a very good dressmaker, in the village and my mother and I always had our clothes made by her to take it off the bread bill.(16)

While many shops were of the small "front room" type, where women could fit in housework and cooking when there were no

customers, a shop kept women tied to the house. With the exception of an early closing day once a week, the shops were open six days. It was a relief for mothers when their girls were old enough to take their turn in the shop.

Despite government and philanthropic reports urging them to pay more attention to their duties as wives and mothers, it was found that economic necessity dictated that almost all the village mothers had some type of employment after marriage, ranging from casual labour when needed in the fields to a six and a half day week in a tea-shop, bearing out such studies as Hammond's Village Labourer (1911)(17) and Rowntree's How the Labourer Lives (1913)(18). Oral evidence demonstrated that the family income was only brought above the poverty line by the contribution of the wives and children.

Footnotes to Chapter 6(a) Men's Work

1. Conditions in agriculture were so bad in the 1870s when the balance of economic power turned from land to industry and the full force of free trade began to be felt that for the first time since the aborted attempt of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1834 the labourers tried to organise. Joseph Arch wrote that in 1872 "Oppression, and hunger and misery, made them desperate, and desperation was the mother of the Union." (Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 67.) The National Agricultural Labourers' Union held meetings in such places as Broadway, Badsey, Pershore and Evesham. Referring to agricultural workers in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire it reported,

They worked very long hours all over this part. A man would start at five o'clock in the morning, and he did not leave off until dark; often he was at it till very late, and cases were frequent where the men had a day's work that went nearly round the clock twice

over. Of course here, as in other places, the carters had a seven days' week; many of them having from five to ten horses to look after. (Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 100)

Though the union founder, Joseph Arch was careful to point out that he was no professional agitator, but an "expert ploughman, hedger and mower, earning 12 shillings per week". (Gaut, The History of Worcestershire Agriculture, (1939) p. 356) he pressed not only for higher wages, but the reform of the system of land tenure, and legislation to compel landlords to improve their tied cottages. As Harold Newby points out, "Farmers and landowners, therefore, set about defending their local spheres of influence with every weapon - coercive, economic and ideological. (Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p.74) Arch was branded as a political agitator and reviled by the employers. When he addressed a meeting at the Town Hall in Evesham in 1878,

The market gardeners of Evesham gave the president of the Labourers' Union a very warm reception; the majority absolutely refused to hear him and hooted all the time he was speaking. (Gaut, The History of Worcestershire Agriculture, (1939) p.357)

Union membership dwindled in the 1880s. Nigel Scotland suggests that the merger with Liberal Party politics was partly responsible for this development in Gloucestershire (Scotland, Agricultural Trade Unionism in Gloucestershire, (Chippenham 1991) 1872-1950, p. 67.) The onset of the prolonged agricultural depression in 1890s, the natural opposition by farmers, bad seasons and labour-saving machinery ended the power of the unions who even in their heyday had never included more than 12 per cent of the workforce in their membership (Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 78), but achievement of the franchise and some improvement in earnings had been gained. In 1906 unionism revived but it was the Eastern counties which now took the lead not those of the Midlands, though the urban based Workers' Union was represented here.

2. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 100.
3. Gaut, The History of Worcestershire Agriculture, (1939) p. 398.
4. Ibid., p. 358.
5. Ibid., p. 398.
6. F. G. D'Aeth in his article, Present Tendencies of Class Differentiation, printed in the Sociological

Review. III, 1910, divides people into seven classes. The agricultural worker, because of his low wage, would fall into the bottom or seventh category which contained all those earning 18s a week. These unfortunates Mr. D'Aeth dismisses as "loafers", and defines their housing as a "slum". (Donald Read (ed.) Documents from Edwardian England, (1973) p. 263.) His definition may have been close as far as some of their housing was concerned, but agricultural labourers were by no means "loafers".

7. Rowntree and Kendall, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) pp. 31, 38, 45.
8. In 1851, for example, farming employed around a quarter of the male labour, by the early 1880s this was reduced to 17 per cent and by 1901 only 12 per cent. (Horn, Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside, (Bristol 1976) p. 60.) There were complaints that the smartest young men migrated to the towns, the railways and into the police force. (Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside, (Bristol 1976) p. 88.) The latter two occupations were very popular for ambitious young men.
9. Horn, Rural Life in England in the First World War, (New York 1984) pp. 4,5.
10. Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 63.
11. Mrs. BR
12. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 28.
13. Fordham, The Agricultural Labourer, (1925) p. 59.
14. Ibid... p. 60.
15. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 32.
16. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 73.
17. Mr. BF.
18. Mrs. AS.
19. Mrs. AS.
20. Mrs. BR.
21. Mrs. BR.

22. Mrs. AS.
23. Mrs. AP.
24. Mrs. AF.
25. Mr. BQ.
26. Mrs. AS.
27. Mrs. AR.
28. Mr. BQ.
29. Mrs. AR.
30. Mrs. AR.
31. Mrs. BG.
32. Mrs. BG.
33. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 33.
34. Mrs. AM.
35. Mrs. AF.
36. Mrs. AE.
37. Mr. BF.
38. Gaut, A History of Worcestershire Agriculture,
(Worcester 1939) p.433.
39. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 10.
40. Mr. BF
41. Miss BI.
42. Mr. BF.
43. Mrs. AB.
44. Horn, Rural Life, (New York 1984) p. 7.
45. Mr. AL.
46. Robert Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 7.

47. Miss BJ.
48. Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 80.
49. Mr. AC.
50. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 33.
51. Mrs. BR.
52. Mr. AD.
53. Mr. AL.
54. Mr. AC.

Footnotes to Chapter 6(b), Domestic and Caring

1. Mrs. BD
2. Mrs. BD.
3. Mrs. BD.
4. Mrs. BD.
5. Mr. AC.
6. Mr. AJ.
7. Mr. AL.
8. Mary Chamberlain, Old Wive's Tales, (1981).
9. Lewis, Women in England, (Brighton 1984) p. 198.
10. Davidoff and Westover, Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words, (1986) p. 6.
11. Roberts, A Woman's Place, (Oxford 1984) p. 107.
12. Houghton, A Walk about Broadway, (Shepperton 1980) p. 36.
13. In Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside, (Bristol 1976) p. 170, Pamela Horn reports a similar, though slightly less stringent moral attitude in Burnham, Buckinghamshire where unmarried women had to pay double fees for the service of the midwife.
14. Mr. AO.

15. Mr. AO.
16. Miss BJ.
17. Andrews, A Village Remembered, (Eastbourne 1971) p. 14.
18. Ibid, p. 15.
19. Miss BJ.
20. Mrs. AK.
21. Mrs. AK.
22. Mr. AL.
23. Mr. AL.
24. Mr. AC.
25. Mr. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 33.
26. Ibid., p. 33.
27. Cadbury, Women's Work and Wages, (Reprint of 1906 ed. 1980) p. 172.
28. Mr. BF.
29. Mr. BF.
30. Mr. BF.
31. Miss BI.
32. Mrs. BK

Footnotes to Chapter 6(c), Gloving

1. Bailey, 'Points, Quirks, Welts and Donkeys', MA thesis, University of Warwick, 1990, p. 4.
2. Ibid, p. 4.
3. Ibid, p. 4.
4. Ibid, p. 12.
5. Green, Rural Industries of England, (1920) pp. 122, 123.

6. Mrs. AG.
7. Census of 1891. County of Worcestershire.
8. Ibid.
9. Mrs. BC.
10. Mrs. AE.
11. Mr. BF.
12. Knight, A Cotswold Lad. (1960) p. 52.
13. Leyland and Troughton. Glovemaking in West Oxfordshire. (Oxford 1974) p. 31.
14. Mrs. AN.
15. Knight, A Cotswold Lad. (1960) p. 52.
16. Leyland and Troughton. Glovemaking in West Oxfordshire. (Oxford 1974) p. 31.
17. Knight, A Cotswold Lad, (1960) p. 54.
18. Mrs. BR.
19. Kitteringham. Country Girls, (1973) p. 58.
20. Letter published in Taunton Courier, 1 January 1862 quoted in Bailey, 'Points, Quirks, Welts & Donkeys'. MA thesis, University of Warwick (1990) p. 21.
21. Quoted Ibid. p. 22.
22. Mrs. BR.
23. Mrs. BR.
24. Mrs. BR.
25. Mrs. AS.
26. Mrs. BD.
27. Mrs. AP.
28. Miss BP.
29. Mrs. AN.

30. Mrs. BL.
31. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography. p. 31.
32. Mrs. AN.
33. Mrs. AN.
34. Mrs. AM.
35. Mrs. BM.

Footnotes to Chapter 6(d), Field Work

1. 1st Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture, 1867-8.
2. Quoted in Heath, British Rural Life and Labour. (1911) p. 11.
3. Quoted Ibid., p. 224.
4. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives, (1913) pp. 110, 129, 136
5. Gibbs, A Cotswold Village, (1914) p. 42.
6. Mrs. BB.
7. Mrs. BR.
8. Mrs. BH.
9. Mrs. BN.
10. Mrs. AR.
11. Mrs. AP.
12. Mrs. BB.
13. Mr. AC.
14. Mrs. AE.
15. Mrs. AM.
16. Mrs. BN.
17. Mrs. BG.

18. Mrs. BN.
19. Mrs. BN.
20. Conference Report, 'Utterly shameless women', Labour History Review, Vol 55, No. 1, Spring 1990.

Footnotes to Chapter 6(e) Shopwork

1. Census of Population, 1921.
2. Figgures, Blockley Shops Remembered, (Shipston-on-Stour 1979) p. 1.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Mrs. AB.
5. Miss BE.
6. Mrs. AF.
7. Mrs. BN.
8. Mrs. AK.
9. Mrs. BC.
10. Mrs. AR.
11. Burrows, unpublished autobiography, p. 2.
12. Miss AQ.
13. Miss AQ.
14. Miss AQ.
15. Mrs. BK
16. Mrs. BK.
17. Hammond, Village Labourer (1911).
18. Rowntree, How the Labourer Lives (1913).

CHAPTER 7 - LEISURE

(a) MEN'S LEISURE

Oral evidence was examined to determine how families spent their leisure. It was found that apart from family outings, leisure was as rigidly segregated by gender as economic roles were. With the exception of the tennis and bowling club in Broadway, sport was an exclusively male leisure occupation. Only one respondent, a shopkeeper's daughter, reported playing tennis, and the opportunity was only available in Broadway. In other villages tennis courts belonged exclusively to private houses. Most boys reported playing football or cricket. Organised sport became very popular in the period studied. Often the village teams were led by the gentry, and they were supported by the shopkeepers in larger villages like Broadway. In Snowhill, Mr. Hodge recalls that it was Major Milvain who organised the team:

I'm afraid we weren't the best dressed team in the Cotswolds as we couldn't afford to buy cricket flannels etc., but a few of us managed to get hold of the odd pair of boots or shirts from local rummage sales, so for the first season or two we were rather a motley crew with the odd one or two wearing white boots and trousers, but after a year or two we had quite a respectable looking team. If you did anything outstanding in a match Major Milvain would present you with a green cricket cap with SBSC (Snowhill Boys' Cricket Club) on the front. It was everyone's ambition to win one, and in about three seasons we were all wearing one...They were great times and good training for the men's team which most of us joined when we were about 14 or 15 years old.(1)

After marriage, it was found that while some continued to play football and occasionally cricket, few men had much time for sport. They often worked 50-60 hours a week and in addition had allotments and gardens to tend. What limited leisure time they had was often spent having a drink with friends. Homemade drink and pub cider was cheap. As mentioned in chapter 5e, Cider and Wine Making, men with small cottages and large families were glad to escape to the pub or their shed "out at the back". For many men this was the only entertainment they could afford, and many respondents felt it was their only form of relaxation. There were many more pubs in the villages in this period than there are today. This social drinking was strictly segregated. Women stayed home with the children.

My father used to go down to the pub most nights. He didn't go down for a heavy drinking session. He used to like the company. And I can always remember him saying, "I'm off down for a packet of fags". And that was when they were about tuppence, Woodbines, about tuppence. But he used to go down most nights because I think he liked the company you know...(What about your mother?) She used to knit. An awful lot. All her life she knitted. And that was her sort of leisure, I think. She'd walk up the garden with her bag on her arm with knitting in, but no she didn't, she never resented it. If it were me I'd resent it terribly. They just took it for granted they should be at home and looking after the family.(2)

Even in 1940, at the end of the period studied, rural society frowned on women going to the pub.

I can remember when the war started and we'd go to parties and dances in Broadway and we'd go to the Swan. I used to look around to see if there was anybody there that knew me because they might go and tell my mother I was in the pub. Although I was 20 she wouldn't have approved of my going to a pub. You didn't do it in those days.(3)

Mrs. AS's mother was very domineering. When her father was younger he had his friends round for a drink in the shed. Later, with the security of his pension and under his doctor's orders, he spent increasing amounts of time in the pub.

My dad used to go to the pub, but not a lot in those (early) days. He did more when he had his pension. He had to get away from mum, because the doctor said to him, "You'll have to get away from her Martin. And you keep going to your pub. It's essential, not only for the exercise." He used to drink beer and he used to pour a can of barley wine into it. It was nutritious. It kept him going.(4)

Whether men made good husbands or not depended to a large extent on whether they controlled the drink or the drink controlled them. Drink was one of the chief causes of domestic strife (see also chapter 5e). Mr. AD recalls that his father drank a lot, but was quick to point out that he was "always good at home".

But it never interfered with his work. I think it killed him in the end. He used to go up to the pub and drink cider, but, as I say, he always did his work. He was never nasty or anything like that. He was always good at home. (And cider was cheap then?) Oh yes, 2d a pint I think. (Did people drink a lot?) Yes and some of the stuff they drank wasn't very good. It was a bit rough. It upset some of them. Some of them used to get a bit quarrelsome at times.(5)

It was not only in the evening that the pubs were busy, as the landlady of a public house in Evesham recalled. Evesham was an excellent location because it catered for all the carters

who came from the surrounding villages with produce for the market.

There was a blacksmith's shop in the yard and the carts used to call at six o'clock in the morning for rum and milk. They were on the main road coming in from Badsey, Wickhamford and all those places around there....Things were not good, but the pubs all seemed to do well. There were 37 pubs in Evesham when I was first married (1939), but a lot of the people, a lot of the husbands in the small ones, would probably do other things like my father-in-law did market gardening.(6)

She explained why so many of her customers preferred the pub to their homes:

It was something for them to do, you see. There was no television and they hadn't wonderful, comfortable homes; homes weren't very comfortable. Some of them would come six o'clock opening time and go home at ten. They wouldn't spend a lot; they hadn't got very much to spend, but cider was 4d a pint when I was first married, and they'd eke it out you know. Because probably with several children at home, a tiny, tiny house, it was an escape.

... There were a lot of cider drinkers around Evesham, and in fact we used to deal with it...Of course, cider in a pub has become a very expensive drink..When I married (1939) cider was 4d, bitter beer was 7d and mild beer was 6d. Relatively in those days there was quite a bit of difference, pennies made a lot of difference.(7)

Drinking was a social problem as well as a leisure activity. In the second half of the nineteenth century both the chapel movement and the Agricultural Labourers' Union had turned their attention to combatting the problem. Joseph Arch named intemperance as the "one great evil to be removed from among the labourers of this country".(8) Despite their efforts, drunkenness remained common. Mrs. BH, wife of a

publican in Evesham, remembers that it was more of a problem in Evesham in the 1930s than now.

The Methodists' teetotal movement provided an alternative social meeting place for men who like Mr. AJ of Mickleton joined their Band of Hope.

Well, there were supposed to be so many drunken men in the village and it was somewhere for them to go, that was the idea. Well, of course, there were four or five pubs in the village then. (Was drinking a problem?) Yes I think it was. My old grandfather Brown, he was a woodsman up at Mickleton Wood; and if it was a wet day they sent 'em home, and they used to go to the pub and if they had a quart of cider and threw it under the table - the first quart - the barman knew that they were going to be there all day.(9)

Mrs. AK's father became another teetotaler.

He wasn't and he used to have too much to drink and then one day - before I was even old enough to know and I was the eldest - he saw some children laughing at the father who'd had too much to drink, and it really, really bothered him, and he cycled to Chipping Campden and signed the pledge. ...He was a very, very keen footballer, a good footballer apparently, and he used to play for Badsey Rangers and Bretforton - and they were all homemade wine makers. This was the trouble, you see. And of course always when they'd won he was welcome anywhere because he was the goal-keeper.(10)

Before the Second World War, when there were few cars on the road, society tolerated a certain amount of drunkenness.

You never heard of anybody getting a summons in those days. 'Cause the bobbies used to come and have a drink. We had some good policemen in them days.(11)

In Blockley,

There were a few, you know, who were known as "characters". They always seemed to be tight, but as far as I know they didn't seem to do anybody any harm. You see the drink was very strong. There were various folk who used to be all

over the road, you know, going home, but they always got there I think.(12)

The butcher's roundsman from Campden delivered to Mickleton,

And the old boy used to get drunk and the horse used to take him home many a Saturday night. He never forgot his politeness - he always took his hat off when he come in - but he was always very slurred. A nice gentleman though, but the old 'orse took him home many a night.(13)

The roundsman left his money for safe-keeping with the blacksmith. "That was quite sensible you know. Then his boss would come and fetch it".(14)

Homemade wine was so plentiful in Snowshill,

It didn't matter which one you went into here in the village, you'd go in sober, but you'd never come out sober.(15)

Respondents reported alcohol problems within their own families. Mr. BF's father died young.

At the bottom he got a bit of a drink problem. Well, mother used to like her drink but it never interfered with anything. A few words - I can visualise it being said now about it, me father's name was Walter - and she'd say, "Well, Walt, my drop of drink is a bit of pleasure for me and damn it all I work hard enough to compensate it". She used to have a quart of beer every night - bitter, it had to be bitter, a quart of bitter and six pennyworth of gin.. (What did your dad drink?) Beer. (He never made cider?) Yes. We always used to have about 120 gallons of cider at the back of the stables. If he'd got a few pounds to spare he'd stop at the pub most days. Of course, it soon went, even as cheap as beer was then - fourpence a pint, and sixpence a pint, and sevenpence, that was the price of beer round here. Mild was the cheap beer, but it was some pretty good stuff.(16)

Mr. BF followed in his father's footsteps.

When I was 25 I went on the road to destruction. I took to drink and became an alcoholic and that was that. It was in

her last years. I drank in a mild form then. She used to say to me at times, "You know I don't like you taking to this drink, Jim, it might get the better of you." It's something right out of your control. (It seemed fairly common.) Well, there's this thing you can't really appreciate. There used to be 28 pubs in Broadway. Every house, very near...they called them beer houses, drinking houses.(17)

One respondent's mother raised a nephew in addition to her eleven children because *"His father drunk and was violent, and they had to move a lot. He could never keep a job"*.(18) One grandmother, a washerwoman, was married to a drunkard.

She had a very hard life. She had seven children, and he was a proper drunkard. Cider you know. There was a lot of drinking in them days.(19)

Alcoholism was a major social problem, and many deaths could be attributed to drink.

There were a lot who died very young, and if you burrowed back you see it was something to do with the homemade wine or sugar or whatever it was. It caused all sorts of problems - sclerosis of the liver, but we didn't know it was that.(20)

There were a lot of people, a lot of men actually - there were suicides from too much drinking. ..My father's first cousin from Bridge Cottage, he shot himself. He'd had too much to drink and it had taken a hold of him. But if you hadn't got that little bit of alcohol that you could have, there was nothing else.(21)

Drinking resulted in great hardship for wives and families. As one respondent who lived in a row of council houses recalled.

Well the children suffered for it really. I mean they didn't pay the rent, but they never got turned out.

They'd have barrels of cider and barrels of wine. And you'd see them come up the garden path plaiting their legs. They used to be a lot of visiting in those days when they had cider.

I can remember like very often on a Saturday night, we'd sort of lock the doors and perhaps even turn the light out.

"Oh, so and so is coming up the road, don't let him know we're here. Because some of them were real .. There was one man in particular, he was very aggressive. I can remember my father coming home one night and he'd knocked him down and blacked his eye.. Very aggressive when he got the drink, yes. And there was another one, he was the same. I can remember him standing at his mother's front door with a shot-gun, and shooting through the letter box. Yes, they were very aggressive. I've known one or two in this village that through the drink they got, think it affected 'em. I mean you very rarely see anybody drunk now, not so drunk, merry perhaps, but whether the drink was different.(22)

From the evidence gathered, apart from those who were members of the village football or cricket team, there was little organised leisure activity for men. Informal socialising around the cider barrel in the shed or a drink in the pub was the most common leisure activity. Apart from the family activities discussed in the next chapter, and meetings, dances and whist in the village school or hall, leisure was segregated.

CHAPTER 7 - LEISURE

(b) WOMEN'S AND FAMILY LEISURE

The immediate response to enquiries about women's leisure activities was that there was little leisure to be filled with any activity, especially for mothers of large families. "She used to knit, and sew, and cook, and repair clothes,"(1) was a typical response.

My mother was always busy. She had no leisure time. She did sewing..she did crocheting and she did some knitting herself. I suppose really furniture polishing she really enjoyed.(2)

At first glance most women's social lives once they were married seemed very circumscribed, often limited to family visits. The concept of the "companionate" marriage had not yet been promoted. The men had their social lives at the pub or in the shed around the cider barrel, but the family as a unit did not entertain friends,

We were friendly with the neighbours, and used to help each other, but we didn't have people in. We didn't have any spare money to entertain.(3)

However, informal entertainment over cups of tea, or opportunities for casual meetings for a gossip were numerous. "Didn't matter who called, there was always a cup of tea for them."(4) Glovers would sit outside their cottage to work in the good weather, and other women would sit outside their front doors and prepare vegetables for the evening meal.

On our front, there was a biggish front and when we'd finished - the shop wasn't shut - I kept on serving, I think the tea-room next door was shut, but I kept going as long as I wanted to sort of thing. Well there was no hours

to shut then. She used to get a chair and sit out on the front there. Shell the peas and cut the beans and talk to people. People were all so friendly. Well I mean it's different isn't it? There used to be two of those big, they call 'em saddle stones, they used to come and sit there and talk. We had railings all round there - lean on these railings. All so friendly you know.(5)

Taking children out in the pram was another opportunity to meet neighbours.

Whereas now you can walk round the village and not see a soul, if you walked to the shop it probably took you all afternoon. You know, you'd got the children in the pram and give them a walk and you don't see that, do you? We knew everybody.(6)

Organised entertainment was very limited, even in Broadway.

Mother went to an occasional whistdrive. There wasn't much else on in the village. In her young day there was nothing I suppose, but in my day there was quite a good bus service to Evesham and the pictures, and that was about it.(7)

It was only the more successful tradesmen's wives and families in Broadway who enjoyed a varied social life. In contrast to most of the respondents they could afford to take advantage of all the village activities and could take the train to Cheltenham for shopping and, from the 1920s onwards, the pictures.

My mother liked to go out. And she had a lot of friends and she was in everything - on different committees, the Conservative Committee, WI and all that...and people used to come in at night, they'd come in and bring their knitting and my mother would take her knitting and go out. And in later years my father and mother took up bowling. They used to go bowling. And I played a lot of tennis in my teens. We used to have tennis suppers and tennis teas and tennis luncheons. We enjoyed the railway. Mother and I could go to Broadway station, get on a train at twenty minutes past eight in the morning, and be in Birmingham, Snowhill, at ten o'clock and we'd have our lunch out and we did a lot of shopping if we wanted new clothes and then we

went out and had tea and then we got a train at ten minutes to six and were back in Broadway before eight o'clock. It was marvellous. You see that's all gone now. There was always somebody (to look after the shop).

And we had a half day closing on a Thursday - one o'clock. And I had a great friend, she came from Wales. She came to the Post Office in Broadway. She used to have a half-day on Thursday and so did I, so we'd go down to the station and get a train about five minutes past one (we'd go a bit early) and go to Cheltenham. We'd soon be in Cheltenham, about two o'clock, and then we used to do our shopping and oh, we used to go to a tea-dance at Boots in Cheltenham. That's all gone. And then we used to go to the first showing, there used to be a variety show twice nightly, and we used to go to the first show about six o'clock and come out of that and have fish and chips for supper and get back to Broadway at twenty minutes to eleven. I had a very happy time.

Mostly people were very sociable and we all went to things together, but some of them were very poor with big families and they couldn't get out. When I look back on it, the mothers, the women, they were good, they worked hard, they kept the children clean, but they did have a struggle. They didn't go out to things like that. No they didn't mix in the social ... but the business people, yes we all got together. Because we were a lot of businesses.(8)

The daughter of the other baker in Broadway also reported shopping in Cheltenham, though with the shop and tea-room open six and a half days a week, there was little time for leisure.

I remember we used to go to Cheltenham on the bus, that's right, we used to do a bit of shopping in Cheltenham. That was about what we called a holiday very near I think. Thursday was early closing.(9)

One social organisation, in addition to the church, which was attended by all classes of village women was the Women's Institute. This was originally started in Canada but a branch was set up in England at the onset of the First World War under the aegis of the Agricultural Organisation Society, primarily

to help in the shortage of food and manpower and to educate women in domestic arts. Mrs. Watt, the Canadian founder, "was astonished by the hard lines of the British class system, but soon realised that she could not build her organisation in Britain without the help of the ruling class".(10) Mrs. Watt herself was replaced by Lady Denman, as the Board of Agriculture required a "woman with title and position, someone able to handle the Ladies of the Manor and turn the expanding organisation to the advantage of a nation beleaguered by war".(11) Therefore, in the early years, as with most social organisations in the village, the top echelons of the Institute were dominated by the gentry (see footnote 12), and before the advent of village halls in the 1920s, meetings were often held in their homes. Mrs. BG was a maid in a very large house in Broadway. Her employers had two spinster daughters:

These ladies - the two of them - belonged to the Worcestershire Women's Institute, the WI. The one was head of all Worcestershire, Miss Lucy Hingley. She was first chairman of the federation. In WI house there's her photograph.(13)

Women's Institute outings were a popular way for women both to escape from the confines of their home and village, and, because such outings were "educational", to avoid social disapproval for this rare desertion. Another domestic and social organisation which in addition enjoyed the added blessing the church was the Mothers' Union. Some villages, like Mickleton, had an Institute before they had a Union. This too

had its talks and outings. Some women belonged to both, but few had time to belong to more than one.

Some forms of leisure were enjoyed by both sexes and often their families as well. Whist drives and dances were held at the school before the 1920s and later in the village halls. The schoolmaster in Childswickham complained in his log book on 8 January 1917 that during the holidays the school "has been used for two evening parties and as a consequence of the romping there remains a quantity of dust on walls and windows." (14) He also reported the misuse of some of the furniture in the Infants Room where a whist drive had been held. The erection of village halls as the centre of organised village entertainment started during the First World War. Broadway's fine Lifford Hall, which was originally intended for amateur theatricals, was built in 1915 and named after Lord Lifford who died in 1913 (see chapter 8a). Smaller villages obtained their halls after the war when ex-army huts could be obtained cheaply. They were often intended as a centre where ex-servicemen could gather for billiards and snooker. The first village halls in Snowhill and Willersey, for example, were both wooden ex-army huts. Snowhill eventually used the village school as a hall when this was closed in the 1930s. Other villages, such as Childswickham, converted a barn to a village hall. Like the pubs, many halls functioned as a sanctuary for men where billiards and card games could be played, and it was not until

later that women were admitted, except for dances, whist drives and concerts.(15)

Mr. Andrews recalls the arguments in favour of buying an old war surplus hospital hut to replace the school as the centre for functions.

For concerts Harry Billey had taken down the partition that divided the cloakroom from the big room, used it to make a stage over the cloakroom floor, then after the 'do' worked into the night re-erecting it in readiness for school next morning. Besides, they hadn't forgotten going round from door to door borrowing chairs and carrying them to the school, where desks were being stacked in the playground and sheeted up in case it rained. At election times, too, Tory and Liberal candidates came to hold meetings - more movement of furniture and general upheaval. Social functions were unheard of then, except perhaps an occasional dance on the green when the old clerk from Saintbury, William Smith, came down with his fiddle. More recently had they not cleaned out a draughty and inconvenient old barn in which to hold the Peace celebration dinner, as generations before had done for public festivities?(16)

The most common family leisure activity was a visit to grandparents or other members of family who lived close by. Mrs. BC's grandmother lived in Snowhill, where there were large family gatherings "most Sundays" with family members from Broadway and Snowhill. Family visits often entailed a long walk. "We used to walk for miles didn't we. All go off together."(17) "Whole families used to go out (walking) on a Sunday".(18) Sunday afternoon after church was a popular time for visiting relations. If, however, the family was not within

walking distance the journey precluded frequent visits. Mrs. AB's aunt lived in Broadway, five miles from Blockley.

She and her husband ran this tea-room and when I was a child it was the great event of the summer to go there in a horse and trap at that time - when you walked up the hill - and have strawberry tea. And if I was very good I was allowed to carry for one or two people, because they had a tea-room at the back. And I remember uncle seemed to spend the whole of his life in this very small kitchen where there were rows of teapots, green teapots, and all he did was boil eggs and make tea.(19)

Tradesmen's families, like the baker in Broadway, who owned a delivery horse could go to visit relatives in other villages on a more regular basis.

We'd always got a horse so my father used to hire a trap from the Swan, put our horse in it and take us up to Campden on Sunday, up to Granny. We liked it there. She had a brother lived in Birmingham and a daughter living in Bristol and in August when the children were on holiday, they used to come to Campden for their holiday. There used to be a great reunion then. We'd put the horse in the trap and off we'd go on a Sunday, making arrangements of course for someone else to *make the dough*. *We never went up Fish Hill*, we went to Willersey (and round) Mother was allowed to stay in the trap (uphill) but we had to walk up the hill.(20)

The steep Broadway Hill isolated relatives in Broadway from their families in Blockley and Chipping Campden. Miss BJ did not see much of her father's numerous family the other side of it. "Although lots of them were only at Chipping Campden, you see, there was always that hill and not even a bus service to Campden." (21)

The spread of bicycle ownership, which started in the 1890s, helped extend the area in which villagers could travel.

Cycling became a major hobby, bringing tourists and income to the villages. In 1932 Broadway Parish Council received a letter of complaint about the danger to pedestrians from cyclists coming down Fish Hill into Broadway.(22) The tea-shops opened in Broadway were a response to the tourist trade brought about by the advent of the bicycle and the railway. Bicycles were however an expensive item which many could not afford.

Lots of people in those days (1920s) didn't have a bicycle, they had to walk more or less. If they wanted to go into a town shopping, they'd go by carrier's cart.(23)

Many families bought bicycles second-hand and frequently two or even three children shared a bike, one on the bar and one behind.

We'd got one bike between my sister and I. She was working at Broadway. At a tea-room at Broadway so it was a toss-up as to who had the bike. And the first time I went I think my brother took me on the back of a bike.(24)

A few never learned to ride a bike.

I had a bicycle handed down from me sister finally, but I couldn't manage it. I reckon if I'd had one sooner I could have managed it. I didn't start early enough."(25)

Holidays were almost unheard of except for visits to relatives living in other parts of the country. Many reported that they or their parents never took holidays until after the Second World War. Those who were not born locally rarely saw their families:

Only once a year. When we were married we didn't see them as often as that because they lived in Norfolk and we lived here, and you couldn't go. The men were always busy, and you hadn't got the money to go on holidays.(26)

If the men had a regular week's annual holiday, they often used it as an opportunity to take other employment.

All that we got was one week a year - all employment was only one week a year - and then I used to get a job out haymaking or something like that, just to make more pocket-money, you know. Money was one of those things. Well, it was like life and death..(27)

Many never had a holiday.

We've never had a holiday in our lives. Only holiday we had after we was married was one weekend with her auntie at Hampton, Evesham.(28)

I've never had a holiday. Not a proper holiday. I go to my daughters' to stay, but I've never had a proper holiday, and I don't think I'll bother now.(29)

Often it was the children rather than their parents who were sent to relatives for a holiday.

The only time was to me auntie in Coventry. We probably had a month there in the summer, you know, in the August holiday. But we never went to the seaside or anything like that. The first time I saw the seaside I was about 17 or 18 year old. If you went to Evesham you know, the nearest town, a busy town, you'd almost been abroad. It's hardly believable. Oh, you'd been to Evesham, you were up to here you know. Because it was bigger than Broadway. It was a town you know. Oh yes.(30)

Some respondents have still never been to London. But others had relatives there.

You'd go to stay with an aunt and uncle who lived in another.. I used to go to London quite a lot, because my aunt and uncle lived in London and I used to go there - on the train, in the charge of the guardsman. They'd meet me at Paddington. My aunt used to meet me at Paddington. We used to have a taxi, and she'd always got chocolate biscuits for tea when we got in...I can remember them taking me down to the docklands, and I used to be frightened because the houses, they came out to the street, and sometimes they'd be having a row and something would come flying out.(31)

Mrs. AK's parents, like many, had no holidays until after they retired, but the girls went to camp.

The only holidays we ever had - Mavis and I were in the guides and we used to go camping. Sometimes only as far as Stanton. We loved it. The cows came through the camp one summer, and it made it more enjoyable.(32)

A baker's wife (a shopkeeper) was the only woman who seemed to have taken a regular holiday,

My mother did. My dad never did, he never wanted to, but my mother used to go to Weston-super-Mare for a week every year, doesn't matter what happened - rain, hail or sunshine. She had a taxi to take her to the station and fetch her back. She just went on her own (when the children were older) 'Cause we had to stop and look after the shop see. She always reckoned to go. I can't remember having a holiday. ..I can seem to remember going to Weston-super-Mare. That was the place where people used to go. I can seem to remember going about once I think.(33)

The other baker in Broadway went on holiday only once.

I only remember my father and mother having a holiday once and that was when my brother was 18 and they considered that he was capable to be left with the business. I would have been 22 and they went up to North Wales. It was the only holiday I've ever known them have.(34)

Whereas it was unusual for women and their families to take holidays, day outings became increasingly common. These were arranged by such organisations as the church, chapel, school and Women's Institute. The popular destination was Weston-super-Mare, the nearest sea-side town, but outings to Southsea, Leamington and Malvern were also reported. In the 1930s Cooks began to run charabanc outings as far afield as Wales and Bournemouth and they were popular with mothers.

We used to take the children to the seaside, but not real holidays. There used to be some trips going. Cooks trips. We had a charabanc in those days. We used to get there about midday and you had to get buses out again by six

o'clock at night. So you weren't there very long, were you?(35)

(Mother) went out once or twice. I can remember before the war they got up what they called a charabanc in those days and we all went down to Bournemouth, and she went there and that was about the first time I should think she ever went out. I can still see us then, we all got out in the New Forest on the way down you know, and I can see all these old ladies milling around. And she never forgot that trip to Bournemouth (Had she ever seen the sea before?) Probably not. I mean she sort of went to Weston once or twice after that like because there were different trips to Weston and she went.(36)

Many remembered their only holiday as children was a day trip to Weston either with their mothers or with the Sunday School.

Wakes and mops provided the traditional day out which many respondents reported they looked forward to. These had developed from the ancient hiring fairs where agricultural servants such as indoor maids of all work, dairymaids and agricultural labourers were hired during the 19th century. Their shilling hiring fee received from the new master would be spent at the fair. While labour was no longer hired in this manner, the fairs remained the major social event in most villages up until the late 1920s. "All we had to look forward to was what we called the Wake. We had a jolly good time then. People would walk for miles."(37)

Mr. Hodge described the Snowhill Wake which was last held when he was 13 years old (1927):

People walked for miles to go to Snowhill Wake. I can only remember the last two or three and they were getting smaller each year, but our parents have told us about all

the stalls etc. taking up every little space in the village, and of hundreds of people from all the neighbouring villages. The stalls were put up anywhere on the road or in front of houses and horses and donkeys wandered about the village grazing. ..

There was a large marquee or "boozing tent" as it was called on the village green, which was always full..We would start saving our pennies weeks before the Wake and would have something like two shillings on the day. But those shillings seemed to go a long way as we had rides on most of the things, and went home loaded with coconuts, sticks of rock, and small items we had won.(38)

The wake at Willersey was also popular (see footnote 39 for a detailed description of Willersey Wake):

The big thing of course in those days was the Willersey Wake. It was the 24th of June you see. We used to have Empire Day - big do in the village hall. And the band used to come on the Sunday before Willersey Wake. (So your entertainment was in the village?) Oh definitely. There was a circus occasionally at Broadway. We used to walk in to see the circus.(40)

Mr. Andrews described the first picture shows held on the green in front of the Bell Inn, Willersey,

Chipperfields brought a large marquee in which they first had a variety show. Later they came with silent movie pictures. The first showed the funeral of King Edward VII. The villagers marvelled that 'even the plumes in the hats moved in the wind'. I remember Mr. Hopkins our next door neighbour (who by the way was a very religious man) asking Dad (who was rather Puritan) if he had been to see the pictures. "No", said Dad. "Then you should, William, if only to see what God has put into the mind of man." Dad went. When he returned he said, "They've brought London to Willersey. It's marvellous."(41)

The Stratford Mop was not only an important event in Stratford (cf. The Dillens, ed. Angela Hewins, Oxford 1982) but also a traditional outing for the whole area. The school log

book for Childswickham notes that a holiday was given for the Stratford Mop every October.(42) Mr. BF's parents had little time for leisure, only "the odd day or so" a year, but

One thing that used to be kept up traditionally was the Stratford Mop, where they roast the ox and all that. And Stratford Mop in general no matter which way you travelled around the Midland area it was always a day out. Because the people that were there were thousands and thousands and thousands. (Did you all go?) Yes, me dad had got a trap, the four of you could sit in that and drive there.(43)

Mr. Andrews from Willersey noted that

Stratford Mop (October 12th) was another 'occasion'. Most people went to 'The Mop', including menfolk who often took a day off, losing the pay in order to be there. Before the railway came it meant a five mile walk to Honeybourne station from where they could get a train. Some preferred to walk the thirteen miles to Stratford and have the extra spending money.(44)

The Cotswold Hunt point-to-points were also very popular for family outings. On March 23, 1920 the school log book for Childswickham notes:

This afternoon the North Cotswold Hunt races were held in the village, but as I was not aware of the date of the event in time to notify the inspector, no holiday was arranged as has been the custom in former years..No children arrived for afternoon school as they had gone with their parents to the races, so school had to be abandoned for the day.

On March 15, 1921 the log book notes, "A half holiday was given today as so many children were being taken to see the North Cotswold Hunt Point to Point Meeting".(45)

In the village of Snowhill the ancient tradition of mummers' plays was kept up until the late 1920s. As Pamela Horn

noted, this depicted the "traditional fight between St. George and the Turkish knight", (46) but in the Snowhill tradition, the Turk, although his face was still blackened, had been transformed into Bold Slasher. Arthur Gibbs, writing about the tradition of the Mummers' plays he saw performed in the Cotswolds around the turn of the century, notes that they were "handed down by oral tradition from father to son, and written copies are never seen in the villages." (47) The cast of the plays he witnessed is again slightly different but clearly has the same origins - Father Christmas, Saint George, and the Doctor remain, the Turkish Knight instead of Bold Slasher fights St. George, but Beelzebub has become an Old Woman, Betsy Bub.

The cast was traditionally all male, and it provided a welcome extra income for farm labourers. Mr. Hodge describes the tradition in which his father took part:

Another thing that everyone looked forward to was the Snowhill Mummers Play which was performed by our fathers. There were seven of them in the play and they usually started a few days before Christmas travelling to all the neighbouring villages and large houses, either on foot or bicycle. They came home each night tired, drunk and happy, and with a little more money, because after each performance they would go round with a frying pan collecting money so after about a week they would have quite a bit of pocket money to share out. The play was a kind of rhyming play, which didn't seem to make a lot of sense. It started off with Father Christmas walking into the room and saying his piece, at the same time moving the chairs back to make room for the performance. Then in walks King George and challenges Bold Slasher to a fight, in which King George is killed. The doctor is called in, and with the help of his assistant, they bring King George back to life. Beelzebub then walks in and threatens them

all with his club if they don't behave themselves. It ends with Fiddler Wit walking in with his fiddle and suggesting a song...That's a rough idea of the play, but the funniest part was when one or two of them forgot their lines and made the rest up, or one of them fell over through having too much to drink. But they were in great demand and were asked to play in such places as the Lygon Arms and Stanway House. My dad played the part of Fiddler Wit and had to black his face as of course they all wore disguises and different costumes. There were times when dad came downstairs in the morning with half of his face still black, owing to tiredness, poor lighting and a drop too much to drink.(48)

Mr. AC was a participant in the Mummers' plays in the 1920s. He recalled how they played to audiences in the local big houses and pubs after work in the evening. They once took a bus and played at the fete at Lord Bathurst's estate in Cirencester.

Oh yes. We used to come home at night about three o'clock as black as ink. (Did they give you money?) Oh yes, that's what we went for in those days. (How much would they give you?) Oh a pound. We'd go round with the frying pan and get it. We'd do it for a week. (How much would you get?) Roughly ten pound a piece. It was a lot of money in them days (What did you spend the money on?) Happiness!(49)

A lot of families played cards. With the advent of the village hall whist drives became popular and were frequently attended by women, but often card playing was for the "lads".

Boxing Night. An all-night session of cards. They always reckoned to have a card session. On more than one occasion I can remember the mothers of some of the young lads - well, as I was saying, they were ten year older than me, the gang, used to be my brother's gang, see. And they'd sit in and me dad would be with 'em and he'd fetch 'em a jug of cider and some bread and cheese and that and they'd play all night. And the mothers of some of the lads used to come at half past five, six o'clock in the morning, lug 'em out and say, "Come on you've got to be at work in another hour".(50)

After the improvement in general education brought about by the education acts of the 1870s, nearly all adults could read, although some of the older folk had trouble writing. Miss BJ recalled that her mother helped her neighbours writing letters and filling out forms.(51) Many families reported taking newspapers, especially in the 1920s and 1930s which they sometimes shared with neighbours, the most popular being the Evesham Journal and the Daily Mail. The Journal was designed to appeal to a wide audience. It contained London and national news as well farming, market garden, and local parish council news. It also included a ladies' news letter, a serial, and a sports section with local football and cricket news and hunt dates. The Daily Mail, launched in 1896, was aimed at the popular market. Duncan Crow writes that it was "full of features to give an interest and an excitement to the dull day of the average man - and the average women, too, for it was a cardinal point in Harmsworth's policy to attract women readers" as he realised their potential as shoppers to attract advertisers.(52) Not only did these papers only cost 1d to 2d but they could be put to good use torn into squares for toilet paper afterwards! Many respondents stated that their mothers had little time for reading, but that they looked at the paper. Some women, however, though lacking in leisure, were avid readers. One was a dressmaker, employing several young girls, had no other interests outside the home and her business.

Not really, day in day out, summer come winter that was it. Everything was self-taught.. And she used to read

terrifically. It never seemed feasible, but she would probably read a reasonable sized book in about two nights. There were books and that to be obtained in those days. A great reader. I can see her saying it now. She used to say to me, "If you want an above standard of education, you read". She was a great believer in reading.(53)

Books were expensive. While a public library staffed by volunteers was opened in Broadway in 1924 at the Old Church School, it started with only 60 books.(54) Mrs. AI's father "was a great reader..of course there weren't many books then. When I went to school he used to *beg of me to bring him a book from school.*"(55) Reading was sometimes encouraged by the more enlightened "gentry" such as Major Milvain and the Russell family in Snowhill. The former family ran an informal library, lending out their own personal books.

The Milvains had their own private library at Greenclose and Sunday afternoons it was open for an hour for the villages to go and choose a book. The Major was very helpful and they had a good selection of wildlife books...(56)

(Mr. Russell) spent an hour in the village hall on Sundays reading a book to us children. Books like Uncle Tom's Cabin and Robinson Crusoe. Then you had to write an essay on the book and the best one won the book. I think my brother Jack won most of the books.(57)

Music was an important aspect of village life which was often stimulated by church attendance and participation in the choir. Mr. Andrews wrote that after joining the choir he started to learn the organ in order to relieve the organist occasionally.

Mary gave me a few instructions, mainly in the use of the pedals...I went on from there, getting practise when I could. The chief difficulty was getting a blower. Boys fought shy of the job and I had no money to tempt them.(58)

As Miss BE recalled,

Music has always been a fascination for me. I think really from a child of eight when I just sat in the parish church and listened and I was most enthralled by the organ. I never thought that I should become an organist but it must have been in me. So about 1920 I became organist at Little Comberton and I'm still organist after 70 years. My mother played a little and my father sang.(59)

Only the more affluent families had a piano, but some of the poorer families had a melodeon, a type of accordion; many more had mouth organs.

Some villages like Bretforton had their own band. These were male only.

He used to play in the village band, it was a brass band then..And at Christmas time they all used to come to our house, or New Year. We used to entertain the whole band. And my mother and I would be cutting bread and cheese and whatever drink they wanted they used to bring - a bottle of beer or cider.(60)

Mass communication and entertainment gradually put paid to the traditional musical pedlars which many respondents recalled:

I can remember the organ-grinder coming with the little monkey ...Yes. He used to pass through the different villages, and used to start playing his organ and we kids used to run out when we heard him.(61)

Opportunities to listen to music, entertainment and news were much extended with the arrival of the wireless and the gramophone.

I do remember having our first wireless, but we didn't have the news and the things, we didn't know all these things. We used to listen to the Palm Court orchestra and things like that. Henry Hall.(62)

Mr. Russell, owner of the Lygon Arms Hotel, invited the villagers of Snowhill to his home to hear the first wireless with a speaker, because the few wirelesses in the village were of the crystal set variety and "were not too successful".(63) Wirelesses, though often rudimentary, began to become common in the 1920s and 1930s; joined by gramophones, which, though more expensive, could be bought on the hire purchase at the end of the 1920s.

My mother's brother lived with us when we were very young until he joined the air force in the early thirties. He was a blacksmith, like his father, and he worked at Hampton at a forge there. Now he bought a gramophone. He bought it on hire purchase from Evesham, but it had to be taken back because he couldn't keep up the instalments. Actually he courted one of the assistants who was very, very musical and he had some beautiful records and my mother did love nice music, and my father did too. And we did, and I often wonder how on earth we did it, but we must have been in the first six to have a radio. It was a cat's whisker thing, but we had it. And my mother had rather a nice voice and she would sing nice songs like, "Somewhere a Voice is Calling". My uncle had the records and she would sing. And she had quite a good appreciation of music. I mean she didn't get to the Beethoven stage, but she did enjoy it and she sang a lot of songs that her mother used to sing.(64)

In the area of family leisure the period was one of both change and continuity. While men continued to enjoy segregated leisure activities - card playing, visiting the public house and the backyard shed for drinks with friends, and respondents stressed that women had little time for leisure activities, the

period saw the growth of collective and commercially organised leisure activities in which women as well as men could participate. As Newby has pointed out, the period saw a "continuing absorption of rural life into the mass consumer culture".(65) Newspapers and public library services encouraged reading, and together with the radio, stimulated interest in national and world events, providing special features for women which promoted their domestic role. This role was also encouraged by the organisation of the Women's Institute and the Mothers' Union, but they also competed with the chapel movement to provide days out for women. The moving pictures were introduced in the larger towns such as Evesham and Cheltenham, providing entertainment for young, usually single villagers, who had the necessary mobility and money. The provision of village halls after the First World War encouraged village social events: whist drives, political meetings and dances. Alongside the new opportunities traditional patterns of family visiting and informal opportunities for neighbours' gossip continued to play an important role. Wakes, mops and point-to-points continued to feature as important events in the year to which all the family looked forward.

Footnotes to chapter 7a, Men's Leisure

1. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 32.
2. Mrs. AG.
3. Mrs. AG.

4. Mrs. AS.
5. Mr. AD.
6. Mrs. BH.
7. Mrs. BH.
8. Arch. Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 244.
9. Mr. AJ.
10. Mrs. AK.
11. Mr. AC.
12. Mrs. AB.
13. Mr. AJ.
14. Mr. AJ.
15. Mr. AC.
16. Mr. BF.
17. Mr. BF.
18. Miss BJ.
19. Mr. AL.
20. Mrs. AM.
21. Mrs. AS.
22. Mrs. AG.

Footnotes to Chapter 7(b), Women's and Family Leisure

1. Mr. AJ.
2. Mrs. AS.
3. Mrs. BR.
4. Mr. AJ.
5. Mrs. BK.
6. Mrs. BM.

7. Miss BI.
8. Miss AQ.
9. Mrs. BK.
10. Dudgeon (ed.) Village Voices, (1989) p. 23.
11. Ibid., p. 25.
12. In Village Voices, a compilation to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the W.I., Miss Viola Williams, Durnford and Woodford WI, recalls, "I can remember way back when an institute in this country was formed, almost without exception the President was the Lady of the Manor, the Secretary was a school mistress (because she was probably the most literate), and the Treasurer, very often, was the doctor's wife, and that was the hierarchy. Gladys Morris explains, that any alternative was impracticable: "It was always the Lady of the Manor who was President - the others wouldn't have felt confident to have taken it on."
13. Mrs. BG.
14. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire County Records Office.
15. Mason, Snowhill, (Cheltenham 1987) p. 57.
16. Harold Andrews, unpublished biography, p. 16.
17. Mrs. BC.
18. Mr. AD.
19. Mrs. AB.
20. Miss AQ.
21. Miss. BJ.
22. Broadway Parish Council Papers, Worcestershire Records Office.
23. Miss BE.
24. Mrs. AG.
25. Mrs. BR.

26. Mrs. AE.
27. Mr. BF.
28. Mr. AE.
29. Mrs. AN.
30. Mr. BF.
31. Mrs. AF.
32. Mrs. AK.
33. Mrs. BK.
34. Miss AQ.
35. Mrs. AB.
36. Mrs. AG.
37. Mrs. BB.
38. Hodges, unpublished autobiography, p.24.
39. Description of Willersey Wake from Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, pp. 15, 16.

The 24th of June is Willersey Wake day. Before World Wars this was the highlight of the year. Mothers made special fruit cake. Bottles of the best home-made wine was reserved to drink with it. Sons who had left home and daughters away in service usually returned for the Wake. Friends from neighbouring villages came too, 'for old times sake'! The pubs got in extra supplies and temporary help. Half the fun of the fair was watching the caravans arrive and the showmen erecting the shows. I'm afraid the teachers found it impossible to get much attention around Wake time.

Mr and Mrs. Curtis from Burford, Oxfordshire, brought their Jinney horses, a fine roundabout that was pulled by a small pony. When the Wake was over and gone, we youngsters lived it all over again by running round the circular track left by the pony. Always the grass was just a bit darker on the track, so it was easy to erect the roundabout in the exact spot each year...

As well as the roundabout they brought a set of swinging boats and a shooting saloon. For this a small hand pump caused water to shoot up from several

nozzles. On the squirts of water small balls danced up and down. Clients endeavoured to shoot these off. If successful they received a trivial prize. These shows were always on the green near the New Inn. On the green opposite were more swinging boats, coconut shies, gingerbread and sweet stalls and the like.

There were squibs too. These were lead tubes similar to toothpaste tubes. They were filled with water - from the pool - and young men and women chased each other, shooting the water over one another. It was part of the fun of the fair...

In my early boyhood the caravans were horse drawn and the fair people rented a field from a local farmer in which to turn their horses.

At night the Wake was lighted by oil flares..There was a metal container from which a tube descended about a couple of feet, it then turned upwards and the flare burned about six inches wide and fan shaped. Several of these together illumined quite a large area. There must have been upwards of a hundred around the Wake.

Later the caravans were hauled by steam traction engines, magnificent in shining brass, some decorated with gold leaf. They not only hauled the vans, they also provided electricity which powered the roundabouts, drove the organs and lighted the whole fair ground. At one time there were four or five of these great engines at Willersey Wake.

40. Mrs. AE.
41. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 16.
42. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire County Records Office.
43. Mr. BF.
44. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 18.
45. Childswickham School Log Book, Worcestershire County Records Office.
46. Horn, Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside, (Bristol 1976) p. 158.
47. Gibbs, A Cotswold Village, (1914) p. 89.
48. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, pp. 21, 22.

49. Mr. AC.
50. Mr. BF.
51. Miss BJ.
52. Crow, The Edwardian Woman, (1977) p. 13.
53. Mr. BF.
54. Records of Broadway Public Library.
55. Mrs. AI.
56. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 33.
57. Ibid., p. 34.
58. Harold Andrews, unpublished autobiography, p. 27.
59. Miss BE.
60. Mrs. AF.
61. Miss BE.
62. Mrs. AF.
63. Hodge, unpublished autobiography, p. 34.
64. Mrs. AS.
65. Newby, Country Life, (1987) p. 211.

CHAPTER 8 - WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR SECURITY - SOCIAL SUPPORT
SYSTEMS
(a) SOCIETY'S SAFETY NET

Before considering the kin-network which was the women's own system of family security, it is necessary to consider what support society offered for the family.

The Victorian principle of "self-help" had led to the establishment of village friendly societies and other clubs. It was not only pig clubs, mentioned in chapter 5(d), which were located at the pub, but also sickness insurance, for example, a Sick and Dividend Society was formed at the Butcher's Arms in Mickleton in 1891. The church also set up similar clubs, such as Mickleton's Provident Benefit Club "to provide against sickness and old age". Payment was made at the vestry. However, there was no provision for the wives and children of subscribers.(1) The need for such sickness insurance is reflected by the fact that Joseph Arch opposed the widows' relief societies which had started in 1881 at two union branches because he realised the demands would outstrip union assets.(2)

The services of a district nurse were also provided by a provident system supported by subscription and supplemented with donations and special efforts. In Mickleton, for example, at the beginning of the century there was a voluntary annual

subscription of nine shillings a head a year for the services of the nurse when required, an additional charge of ten shillings being charged for the delivery of babies. Local District Nursing Associations, run by voluntary representatives of the villages concerned, collected the subscriptions and paid the nurse's salary of £130 a year.(3) Doctor's clubs were organised in a similar way. For example, the doctor in Willesey organised a representative in each village to collect subscriptions, and "for her assistance, the representative and her family received free doctoring."(4)

The state provision of a basic safety net came into being during the period studied. The measures gradually superseded the harsh provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which had provided workhouses supervised by the Poor Law Unions to replace outdoor relief, or as Joseph Ashby complained, "to curse the workers with dread of their last days".(5) Conditions in the workhouse were deliberately severe enough to discourage all but the really destitute from applying. Parishes were grouped together into unions under the control of a Poor Law Board and centred on a market town or other prominent town.(6) Some outdoor relief was also given in the form of food, fuel and small payments. The unemployed could augment this by their family's small earnings and receipts from private charities. Like the workhouse such poor relief brought social stigma. The family's circumstances were carefully investigated

by the local board, members of which might be former employers or fellow villagers. Until 1918 recipients were also disenfranchised.(7) Evesham was the union centre for the Broadway area.

The new provisions, revolutionary as they were felt at the time, were very basic. But though low (initially 5s a week), old age pensions, introduced by Lloyd George in 1909, were an important aid for the elderly poor in maintaining a degree of independence. Like outdoor relief the new pensions were means tested. Only those who were over 70 and in receipt of less than twelve shillings a week could qualify and only those in receipt of eight shillings a week or less received the full five shillings. Initially, until 1910, persons could not qualify for a pension if they were receiving poor relief. National Insurance was introduced in 1911, but health insurance did not cover dependents until the 1940s. Farm workers' wages were deemed insufficient to support the contributions so they were not included in the National Unemployment insurance schemes until 1936, when, Newby states, "for the first time since 1834 the shadow of the workhouse was lifted from the farmworker".(8) Married women could only join if they were insured as workers in their own right. For those eligible the National Insurance provided people earning less than £160 a year with insurance against sickness at a premium of 4d a week (employers paying a contribution of 3d and the state 2d). The

insured then received an income of 10s a week when sick for the first three months. and 5s a week for a further three months, plus free medical attention from a panel doctor. A maternity grant of 30s was part of the provisions. One and a half millions pounds was spent building sanatoriums to combat the widespread plague of tuberculosis.

While the Royal Commission of 1909 had recommended the replacement of the locally elected board of guardians to oversee the administration of the Poor Law by county councils and the replacement of the union mixed workhouse with a number of specialized institutions, it was not until 1929 that the boards of guardians' duties were transferred to the county councils and public assistance committees set up.

The workhouse was the much feared last resort for the indigent, elderly and infirm. It was reported that most elderly people preferred the customary inadequate outdoor poor relief of one or two shillings a week to entry into the workhouse. It was considered a failure on the part of the family if relatives were relegated there and to end in the workhouse was the ultimate degradation to be avoided at all costs. It was the family's legal as well as moral duty to look after its elderly and it was the women of the family who shouldered this burden (see chapter 8b). Fred Archer writes of the Evesham Union workhouse:

I do recollect that the permanent inmates, if married, met only in the gardens. The men worked in the gardens and fed the pigs with the swill from the kitchen. The women did housework. "Whom God had joined together let no man put asunder" didn't apply to the Poor Law. Yes, old folk feared the workhouse.(9)

Respondents remembered the fear of the workhouse experienced by the elderly, and were anxious to point out that like many old people (see chapter 8b) their grandparents went to live with their daughters to avoid such a fate.

The old people in the village who didn't have children went to the workhouse. It was in Evesham - Avonside. Well, they had to go if they couldn't look after themselves, all they had (as outdoor relief outside the workhouse) was a loaf and I think it was a shilling a week. And they used to begrudge it them. You know, widows, old widows.(10)

Poor married women were reluctant to apply for a relief order for their confinement for fear of its being accompanied by a removal order. Therefore, most women who delivered in the workhouse were single and "accusations of immorality compounded their status of pauper".(11) Similarly, the majority of children admitted to the workhouse were registered as illegitimate: for example, nine of the thirteen admitted to the Evesham Union in 1901 and six of the ten admitted in 1910. All their mothers were also registered as inmates.(12)

The workhouse was regarded with such odium that it was employed as a bogeyman to discipline recalcitrant children, "I remember Mum used to threaten to put us in there if we didn't behave ourselves on Sunday".(13)

When a relative had to be assigned to the workhouse the kin network still operated. even if a visit meant a ten mile walk.

The part where the travellers went was called the "grubber" but the other was the workhouse. I had an aunt who was in there for many years because she had rheumatic fever as a girl and it left her all crippled up and she had nobody after her parents died and she was in there. My dad and my uncle used to go very often on Sundays. They had to walk to Evesham and back to see her (a ten mile journey). I can remember walking with my cousin from Broadway and her dad, and me and my dad. I was only about eleven I think when I started walking to Evesham and back to see her. (What were conditions like?) Well it wasn't very nice I don't think. I can remember the room we went in was one big room with a long trestle table all down the middle set up for meals but I don't know what the sleeping part was like because I never saw that. But my aunt had given me the idea that it wasn't very nice. I think they were kept clean and looked after and had enough to eat and that. (Did they have to work?) Those that could used to do something. (Did your aunt?) No, her arms were all crippled up and she was all bent up.(14)

One respondent worked for a time as an untrained nurse in one of the new 1930-style departmentalised workhouses.

There was what was really the workhouse in those days in Winchcombe, but they'd opened a new ward specially for people who had come out of mental homes - old ladies - people who had nowhere else to go; they had no relations or, if they did, they didn't want them. They were considered to be cured enough not to have to stay in the mental home.(15)

As the workhouse was considered a degradation to be avoided at all costs. the innovation of the pension was, as Mrs. BR commented, a great step forward for the elderly. (See footnote 16 for the Daily Express report on the first day of the pension payout, 1 January 1909.)

That's why my old granny used to say, "Oh God Bless Lloyd George. I can hear her say it. 'Cause he brought the

pension in. It made all the difference in the world. Oh he WAS a good man... I never heard anyone else praise 'im, only my grandmother. I expect it was because they had to pay the stamp. And it wasn't only, what tuppence a week, was it? The insurance stamp. People that was working had to pay, you see, same as they do now. They didn't like to pay it. Still it helped old people. It would help them when they was old, but they couldn't see as far as that. It must have been terrible before for women who'd lost their husbands - a shilling and a loaf, well, what could you do? And they used to be awful to 'em. You know that man that was over the lot. I think they chopped sticks at the workhouse and broke stones, repaired the roads, the sides of the road.(17)

Initially the pension was not very much money and as already noted it was restricted to the very poor, but for those who qualified it could be drawn every week. "When my dad had his pension he said, 'I've never been so well off in my life' because it was regular."(18)

Most villages had long provided their own charities to tide the "deserving" poor over periods of distress, though there was a social stigma attached to accepting their aid. Howard Newby in his study The Deferential Worker saw the combination of this and the poor law as a means of controlling the workers:

Charity was an integral part of the relationship between the agricultural worker and his social superiors and provided a substitute for the deficiencies of the Poor Law at the local level... Indeed charity and patronage complemented the Poor Law as a means of social control: charity was the carrot while the Poor Law represented the stick which was to engender harmonious class relationships (19)

Many charities were run by the church. Local committees decided who could qualify and many were too proud to apply.

They did not like their finances being discussed by their neighbours and "betters".

Mrs. Bell Knight was very poor. She was a widow. She was pregnant when he died. She was very hard up. But you see they were too proud to let you know. They just went to work. (20)

Parochial charities - such as Hodge's in Broadway to help poor boys with education and apprenticing, and charities to provide the poor with warmth in the form of coal and blankets - were very prevalent.(21) Blankets were expensive items and poorer families often lacked a sufficient number. Childswickham had no blanket charity and one respondent remembers, "We had very, very old blankets - don't imagine there was much wool left in them at all. I don't remember having new bedding... We had coats on the bed."(22) Respondents in Broadway reported that their families collected blankets from the Broadway charity:

There were some sort of charities, where you could get extra things, extra blankets and things... (Mrs. BO) There was something to do with the church, what charity was it that used to give the blankets? I can remember going down by the Midland Bank and collecting that.(23)

In Mickleton there was an education charity which was provided from the rent of the school and schoolmaster's house.(24)

Many of the old church charities were bread charities, which were much needed in the nineteenth century. As Howard Newby comments, "Many agricultural labourers were, then, kept literally and metaphorically on the bread line".(25) Broadway had various bread doles, and in Blockley the Countess of

Northampton's Charity furnished "20 poor people with a twopenny loaf of bread each weekly".(26) "There used to be a shelf at the back of the church and there were loaves, and presumably they were given out on a Sunday."(27)

The continued importance of bread in the family budget in the twentieth century is reflected by the extensive credit which had to be given by the bakers (see chapter 5b). Fred Archer writes,

Never having known hunger myself, I mixed and talked with men who had. "Give us this day our daily bread", meant something to them. Bread to them was sacred. To waste a crust was a crime..(28)

Sometimes the vicar's wife would play her traditional charitable role: "If anyone was ill she used to take jellies and stuff around."(29) (For Joseph Arch's view on such charity in the nineteenth century see footnote 30.)

In addition to receiving charity, many respondents' families gave charity to others, not only to their immediate family, as shown in chapter 8b, but to neighbours and fellow villagers. Sometimes this neighbourliness was taken advantage of.

One poor family used to live down Willersey Farm. My mum used to swear those kids fell into the pool so they could come down to our house and she'd rig them out in my brothers' clothes, which we never saw again. They used to come when I was down Badsey Lane, "Have you got a box of matches you could lend us, have you got a candle you can lend us? We've got no lights."(31)

The period 1890-1940 thus saw a gradual change in society's safety net. With the introduction of the Old Age Pension in 1909 and National Insurance in 1911, local personalised and paternalistic welfare, for which expressions of deference and gratitude were expected, started to be replaced by the concept of the Welfare state and individual rights to benefits.

Logically the politics of the rural working class families might have been expected to reflect their own class interests; they ought to have supported those parties which advocated social welfare, the Liberals and the Labour Party, as did the urban working class. When the Reform Bill of 1884 had finally enfranchised the country householders, the last large male group to obtain the vote, Joseph Arch, their first representative in parliament, exulted in the fact that agricultural workers were "No longer voiceless, voteless and hopeless".(32) In 1898 the radical Countess of Warwick wrote:

With the franchise the agricultural labourer became politically a free man. And recent legislation, in the direction of allotments, free education, parish councils and so forth, has recognised that henceforth his interests are to be considered.(33)

Yet it is interesting to note that the country vote remained Conservative in all the villages surveyed. The majority of the respondents' fathers - and mothers after they had achieved the vote - were Conservative. Few voted along class lines and identified their interests with the radical Liberals who had

brought in the welfare reforms of "the People's Budget" and who took up the demands of the agricultural unions for small holdings and allotments with their advocacy of "three acres and a cow". Nor did they later generally support the growing socialist movement in the towns. Although the ballot had been secret since 1872, paternalism remained extremely strong in the country. The gentry monopolised local as well as national government. For example, in 1909 Viscount Lifford of Broadway held the offices of Justice of the Peace, County Councillor, and Chairman of the Parish Council. He was also influential in the administration of parochial charities.(34) On January 8 1910 he presided at the election meeting in support of the Unionist candidate, Mr. Monsell, who was duly elected MP for South Worcestershire.(35) Most respondents' families voted with their employers and landlords, the landowners and gentry, and were flattered, if somewhat cynical, about being canvassed by them for their vote.

My father always voted Conservative. I used to go with him to the polling station and when he came out he would go like that (give a wink) to the teller at the gates to indicate he'd voted Tory.. My father voted for the candidates because they were all the landed gentry and let's face it, if they came round to talk they put on their best behaviour and they recognised everybody and spoke to everybody. Though I doubt if they'd been bothered with anybody if they hadn't been canvassing for votes.(36)

Oral evidence suggests that farm labourers were usually as Conservative as the majority of shopkeepers. Not only their

jobs but also their housing were dependent on their employers. Revenge via the ballot box could be taken on a bad employer.

Conservative. You had to be those days. Well the bosses were Conservative. I think probably a few were Labour or something but they daren't let 'em know if they were. Oh no, they used to take you to vote. I know my boss I worked for - he was a bit of a pig really - and he took us, the butler and the gardener and the groom, the whole lot of us to vote, and we all voted Labour. The best of it, he stopped at the pub and put a pound down, which was a lot of money then, drinks all round for everybody. And we all voted Labour! He didn't know that. We had a talk between ourselves.(37)

However, most respondents inherited their politics, like their religion, without much thought or questioning. Comments like the following were common:

Father didn't take much interest in politics, but he must have been Conservative because that's how I was brought up. Most of the people were round here.(38)

Only three fathers who were farm labourers were reported as being Liberal. Liberals were most often to be found amongst the market gardeners who were often their own bosses and were perhaps influenced by the Liberal advocacy of smallholding. Mr. BQ's father, a market gardener, wrote articles for the local paper:

My father took an interest in politics and my eldest brother, they were Liberals. My brother was secretary to the Fladbury and District Association. He never missed voting. There was a lot of Liberals here. But it was Conservative I suppose. Farmers and quite a lot about here was.(39)

Mrs. AG's father, like many, was not really interested in politics.

I mean he used to vote, but I don't know, I think he was a Liberal more than anything... I don't think people were into politics so much in those days".(40)

Most tradesmen were Conservative, but one of the bakers was circumspect about his politics: "He always said that you didn't have anything to do with politics, otherwise you'd offend half your customers." (41)

Shortly before the Second World War Sir Oswald Mosley gained adherents for his Blackshirt Movement in the market town of Evesham. They were interned for a short time at the beginning of the war. "There was a certain element in Evesham that joined the Blackshirts... It appealed to the type of element that probably goes today and creates trouble at football matches". (42)

Only two respondents reported that their fathers voted Labour. The First World War changed the voting pattern of one father:

I know my mother's family were all Liberals, but I think my father, sort of after coming home from the war, it was Mr. Baldwin then, he suddenly decided he was going to vote Labour for some reason, but it just happened to be that period. But my grandfather was Conservative and we are all Conservative. (43)

One father had lived in Birmingham until he married and started to work on his father-in-law's market garden. He objected to the servility of the village class system. "He always said he was as good as anybody else." (44) (See chapter 3c, Class.) His daughter recalls,

Dad in later years was a Labour man. Well I suppose they were bound to be 'cause they'd had a hard time you see. It

was hard. He was a Labour man. but I didn't ever know about mother...They didn't ever tell each other, or us. they didn't in those days. It was a complete secret..(45)

Most women. however. seem to have shared their husband's voting patterns. They were reported as being unenthusiastic about politics and completely indifferent to the question of suffrage for women. The suffrage campaigners were mostly upper and middle class. and though the Women's Social and Political Union recruited many union women. their battleground was far from the village. As respondents noted. "No the things that went on .. it was miles away to them, you know."(46) "I think all you were interested in was your home in those days."(47) For working class women in the country the question was irrelevant. "Don't think people around here were keen on it. They knew their place. didn't they?"(48) None of the respondents' families in the villages showed any interest in the movement.

My mother wouldn't have known. She didn't understand politics. We used to take a daily paper when we could afford it. the Daily Mail. I wouldn't think that the average woman in the village knew about votes for women or would have cared very much. I think that life was so hard. It was a full time job trying to make ends meet.(49)

Suffrage? Oh no. Goodness gracious no. Well it was a different period wasn't it. You didn't understand politics like they do today. It isn't a bit the same. You didn't know things. You didn't hear things the same. We used to have the newspaper, daily, very often. But you didn't get much out of the papers in those days.(50)

Only one respondent had a relative who was interested in suffrage but, significantly, she lived not in the country but in Birmingham.

My aunty was one of these people that chained herself to the railings. She's dead now of course, they all are. We were close...She had very strong views on everything. She wasn't in service or anything. She had a job in Birmingham, but I don't know what it was... and she had posh friends too. She used to join all these rallies and things, even in those days...Of course she'd left home, you see, and moved to Birmingham and then you meet different people.(51)

Others agreed that this was an urban movement:

I think they got more support from people who lived in towns.(52) People who worked in factories and got together in unions and things like that, but ordinary village people, no.(53)

When the suffrage movement was discussed it was considered a subject for ridicule by villagers. They were shocked by the militant suffragettes' tactics, as reported in the Northcliffe press, though they relished the scandal when two of the daughters of a member of the Broadway "gentry" were involved.

At the end of Springfield Lane at Springfield House, the Blomfields lived with their two daughters. Those two girls, Mary and Eleanor, they were very keen suffragettes and one of them she disgraced herself, didn't she, by throwing herself down in front of the king's horse. She wasn't killed, but she was supposed to have disgraced herself and her family by throwing herself down in front of the king somewhere and saying, "For God's sake stop forcible feeding." Mind it's a good many years ago, but I can just remember that. Anything local like that I mean my mother was very interested in. I don't think she would have supported the idea. I think she was quite satisfied with the men voting.(54)

Another respondent commented that while in the towns "women were starting coming out, getting their own way a bit, you

know", his own mother "just didn't have the time, I don't think"(55) to be interested in the vote.

Well she used to talk about, what's her name, that chained herself to the rails? Pankhurst. Used to laugh at her, you know.(56)

Miss AQ, a baker's daughter from Broadway, was atypical in being involved in politics. She became secretary to the Broadway Conservative Association in the 1930s. Like most shopkeepers, her father and mother were both staunch Conservatives.

Lady Bowes-Lyon lived at the top of the village in a lovely house, at the top of the hill. Years ago the Queen Mother, before she was married, she used to come to Broadway to visit her aunt and we used to see her in the village. Lady Maud was interested in the village. Some of the people in the big houses they couldn't be bothered. She wanted me to go on the Conservative Committee when I was eighteen. She was president then. She wanted somebody new, somebody young on the committee, so I went on when I was eighteen. So I've been very much connected with it really.

We had a Member, Rupert de la Bere, I knew him very well, he used to visit me at the shop. I was secretary for the Broadway Committee. I was secretary for about nine years I think. Well Rupert de la Bere, he took me to No. 10 Downing Street to a reception. You know when Chamberlain went over to Munich and he came back with this scrap of paper? It was that time. Just a year before the outbreak of war. He took me into London. He was the Member of Parliament. I don't know why he seemed to take a fancy to me. He was ever so good to me. Whenever he came through Broadway he never used to pass, he always used to come. My mother used to laugh and say, "Here's your boyfriend coming again." He also took me to the Houses of Parliament where I had strawberry tea. That was nice.(57)

More typical of women's political attitudes when they achieved the vote was the following comment,

Mother used to vote - Wormington. There was a car used to come and I think it was more for the car ride - I do -

there wasn't any cars about then. And they'd sit in that car and I often wished I could go. It didn't worry mother whether women had the vote or not. I expect she voted the same as my father - I don't know what she voted.(58)

Some were even less interested.

I don't think she ever voted in her life. Even in later years..We'd try to persuade my mother to vote, but she'd never vote. "I don't understand it", she said, "I don't understand it. And I'm not voting. And whoever goes in we shan't be any better off." ..I can remember they used to come round and pick you up in cars and she'd say, "Well, they pick you up today and they'll run over you tomorrow". And my mother used to go in the house and shut the door, and pull the curtains and hide behind the curtains and if anyone knocked on the door, she wouldn't answer the door.(59)

Sometimes women were more interested in the social side of politics than in the issues involved. One mother was not interested in politics, but went to members' meetings for an evening out.(60) Another mother "always belonged to the Primrose League and things like that".(61)

While some women voted Liberal out of gratitude for the pension, there seems to have been little general awareness of class interest in the voting pattern in the Broadway area. However, Mr. Monsell, Union MP for South Worcestershire, was careful to assure voters in his campaign speech in 1910 that the Pension Act would remain under the Unionist Government.(62) As many respondents commented, it remained "a very, very conservative area all around here".(63) Families remained more conscious of the obligations and benefits deriving from their

own family kin network than their wider participation in the obligations and nascent benefits of a state welfare system.

CHAPTER 8 - WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR SECURITY - SOCIAL SUPPORT
SYSTEMS
(b) THE EXTENDED FAMILY

After an examination of society's safety net in chapter 8a, oral evidence was studied to determine how families coped in times of difficulty, illness and death of breadwinners. In the period of this study women remained among the poorest members of the population (see footnote 1). As has been seen, even in good times the village families studied had to struggle to supply their daily requirements: there was no cushion of savings to fall back on in hard times, and only the rudiments of a government welfare programme. When sickness, death, or other disaster hit the family it was to their own members, or to the members of their extended family - grandparents, aunts, and uncles - that they turned for aid. Illness was not only an emotional strain on the family but also a financial one. As noted in chapter 8a, the National Health Insurance Act of 1911 provided access to a doctor for all insured workers, but not for their dependants. In keeping with the prevalent philosophy of the male breadwinner and the family wage, married women home workers were excluded from its unemployment provisions.

The women who managed the family budget, therefore, were not provided with protection from the state. If they were sick they often called in the doctor as a last resort. As noted in chapter 6b, untrained midwives often attended them at

childbirth: they were cheaper than the doctor and the district nurse. When the doctor did attend childbirth, he needed to spend less time with the patient if there was a neighbourhood attendant. These same untrained nurses attended sick and death beds, and laid out the dead. Ordinary neighbours who were experienced mothers were also sent for when children were ill.

There was a woman over here had 18 children. My brother, he had convulsions - first couple of years he'd have sometimes three a day. And if my mother got nervous she'd send for Mrs. Collins who'd had the 18 children, and she'd be over here like a shot. They'd be giving him baths in hot water and massaging him and all that.(2)

Home remedies were passed on from one generation of women to another. Some families had whole recipe books in order to keep the doctor and his bills at bay.

Mother made no end (of remedies), but my sister had the book. I'll tell you what she used to make that was very good if you had a cough - blackberry vinegar. You take blackberries and boil vinegar with them and then strain it. You used to have a spoonful. She also used to make elderberry syrup for a cold.

Goose fat was rubbed on your chest if you had a cold. About two or three times. 'cause it's some rum stuff, goose grease is. it will go through anything really. It's strong. It relieved your chest. (Did they have anything for chilblains?) Yes, wrapped pigskin round, you know, the skin that comes off the leaf. well they used to wrap that round because it was greasy you know. It kept 'em from bursting and that.(3)

Though goose fat was the most frequently mentioned remedy, badger's oil was also used. The fat was rubbed in well, covered with a piece of flannel and left in place until the patient was better. Cough mixture was also made out of boiled "crow onions" (wild garlic). This reportedly tasted vile, but was effective.

Pamela Horn points out that despite the fact that landworkers received only two-thirds the average industrial wage, including payments in kind, and that housing was primitive and insanitary, they remained throughout the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth century the healthiest manual workers in the country.(4) This is perhaps more an indictment of the conditions of the urban workers than a testimony of the wellbeing of the country worker and his family. The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the period 1880-92 noted that mortality rates among farm workers were only "66 per cent of standard mortality among all occupied males".(5) Russell Garnier notes that in 1908 that, "Longevity is almost the only privilege of our rural peasantry in which our town industrial classes cannot share.(6)

The chief illness which threatened the lives of children was diphtheria. Outbreaks of measles, whooping cough, and scarlet fever can also be found in the school log books; medical officers often had to close schools during the frequent measles and less frequent scarlet fever epidemics. Adults and children alike died of pneumonia and influenza, particularly in the virulent 'flu' epidemic which followed the First World War. One respondent's brother survived this 'flu', but had it so badly that

He never done any work for seven years after that, and then he done little jobs. He couldn't go out to work. And he

done some shoes. and then he had to give it up because he wasn't paid for some of the work he done.(7)

Many respondents reported that their families were as devastated by the 'flu as by the First World War. Mr. AJ's grandmother

Lost two, the twins in that 'flu. Her husband died the day Armistice was signed and they had news to say my father was wounded in 1918, so they had a rare old lot just then.(8)

Women suffered from problems of frequent pregnancy and childbirth. Many had goitres, commonly called "Worcestershire neck", from lack of iodine. Tuberculosis was the most common serious illnesses amongst children, young adults and women (men working out in the fresh air were less prone). It was spread by the chronic overcrowding at home, and it attacked the neck glands as well as the lungs. People would not talk about it though many bore its scars on their necks: "it was a scourge that people shouldn't discuss".(9) "You see there was nothing for it at that time".(10) As mentioned in chapter 6c, glovers were particularly prone to this disease.

One of the points David Lloyd George reiterated in his "them and us" speeches before the First World War was the fact that there were 58,000 terminal cases of consumption per year in Britain and he contrasted this with the survival of the wealthy few who were able to take a cure in a Swiss sanatorium.

Rheumatism and arthritis crippled many who worked on the land and who lived in damp cottages.

Out all weathers. Sprout picking and those sort of jobs, which I hated, but you got extra money for it you see. Terrible job. That's what crippled me up. Yes the wear and tear on the joints, and the heavy work.(11)

Many men worked in fields a long way from their homes. One respondent from Childswickham related her father biked over six miles:

My dad had to bike to Weston Subedge to get the lorry. Although it was a Badsey firm, he had to bike. And he said he was soaked to the skin before he started the day's sprout picking.(12)

Doctors made regular rounds of the local villages. The doctor and the vet were the first to have cars in Broadway, in addition to the "nobs".(13) However, many respondents could remember the doctor riding on his rounds. When Mrs. BC's daughter was born in a snowstorm up on Snowhill the doctor was forced to walk the one and a half miles from Broadway. Despite this evidence of devotion to duty, there is an impression that sometimes their visits to the poor were not as lengthy as they would have been to their more affluent patients. "Dr. Alexander used to ride... He used to get as near to the house as he could, he'd got half the horse sticking out of the house."(14)

Mr. AD remembers Dr.Alexander's successor doing the same,

He used to ride up to our window, and tap on the window with his whip: we had to open the window to him. He didn't get off his horse, "Oh she looks all right", he'd call.(15)

The extended family would often help out with the doctor's and chemist's bills.

When I was ill, if my uncle hadn't have kept me when I was sick, well I would have died I suppose. I was a weakling. I used to be in a cot by the fire, and they said if it hadn't been for Harry Stewart I'd have died. I still see that Scott's emulsion bottle with the fish on. He used to keep pumping that down.(16)

It was this kin network on which women relied in time of sickness, crisis, or simply overcrowding. Women were the chief providers of this mutual aid, and often this role began when they were children, if their mothers were unwell or having another baby. Mrs. BL, for example, one of 13 children was kept home frequently from school to look after her sickly mother. The doctor told the attendance officer that her duties at home had priority over her schooling and she left school at 13 to look after the family and do gloving.(17)

One respondent refused an offer of marriage because she felt it her duty to look after her parents (as well as the family bakery shop).

I wouldn't ever leave my mother. She was never well. She had a lot of illness. And I wouldn't leave her. ..my mother died. She had a terrible illness and I looked after her till the end...I had my father for twelve years after my mother died. Everything went on just the same. I was there. I had twelve years of it, chained to my father. I never went out anywhere, never had a holiday, never had a day off. He couldn't bear me out of his sight and I'm afraid I gave into him. I couldn't even go to the Institute because if I went out and left him he didn't like it..It's a long time out of your life.(18)

While children's parents were rarely divided by divorce (there was only one case of separation reported). there were many reports of division by death. The early death of one parent and the remarriage of the surviving parent was fairly common. Many respondents had step-parents. Sometimes this remarriage was the direct result of a relative stepping into the breach.

My mother died of the influenza in 1918. I was just a baby. My mother's sister came to live with us and look after us. A lot in the village died. They told me the bells never stopped ringing. They tolled one if it was a woman dying and two if it was a man. I was nine months old. My aunt wasn't married, but she and my father married eventually. I had an older sister and two older brothers. My older sister was nine, my next brother was seven and a half and my next brother was three.(19)

Mrs. BR's elder sister and her husband lived with the family. When her sister died in 1914, leaving a small blind baby, she and her mother looked after the child while his father was in the army. Later Mrs. BR married her former brother-in-law.(20)

Sometimes an elder daughter kept house for her father and raised the younger children.

My paternal granny died within a few months of having her last child. And my aunt Nell, I loved her, she gave up her life. Her mother died when the youngest was born and she was about 17 or 18 and a very attractive woman, and she could have married. But she wouldn't give up the family. She bought them all up...And not only did she bring up the family, but she worked with Uncle Jim, the youngest one, on his land because he'd got a lot of land between Badsey and Willersey.(21)

But there were ten children in the family. Kin from the colonies were called in to help when two of the boys were old enough to leave home at the end of the First World War.

Two uncles had to go to Canada because they couldn't afford to feed them - at fourteen. And it was dreadful apparently. These two boys at separate times were taken away from home. Someone from Canada. I think after the first World War, one of my great uncles took one back on his demobilisation, because he was in France. And one of these boys was led out screaming and I still think of it. They were born the ten of them and only one died...The one that died died at 19 of diphtheria.(22)

Mrs. AK's grandfather was left with three daughters when his wife died. Because the eldest girl was not old enough to keep house, the family had to be split up. Two girls stayed at Saintbury with their maternal grandmother; he and his three year old daughter went to live with his sister, her husband and five sons.

And my grandfather and the other one - my mother - had to go to Willersey to live with an aunt, so she was bought up with these cousins as her brothers to all intents and purposes.(23)

Mr. BQ recalled his mother's death:

My mother died when I was nine in 1914 and my father married again in 1917 or 18. I was the youngest. My eldest brother was married, and my next was living in Warwick, and the third, the last one next to me, he was killed in action in France in 1915. He was only 16...My mother was only 45 when she died..She died very sudden. Every Sunday there was a children's service at half past two. It was my job every Sunday to go and clang the bells for the children's service. Well, this particular Sunday I was in there, had't been there many minutes when Jim Turner came rushing in and said, "Go home at once". Well, I got my hat and coat and started for the house wondering whatever was the matter and it had happened. Still she didn't suffer, that was one blessing. She died in the April. My brother was killed in the beginning of May.(24)

Mr. BQ was sent to live with his father's sister and remained there even after his father remarried. Later, when he was earning, he lived with his mother's unmarried sister in a house belonging to his step-mother and her sisters. It was an arrangement which benefited them all.

Years ago she was governess to a family. She had a wonderful good job. She travelled with them all over the place. She had her pension and that was it. There was my bit of money that I had you see, and plenty of vegetables off the land and eggs and all that sort of thing.(25)

It was often reported that mothers took in needy relatives. One mother for example brought up a cousin whose mother had died and also a nephew in addition to her own 11 children. The nephew's father was a violent drunkard who could never keep a job, and consequently had to move frequently. As soon as the boy was 14 and could earn, his father demanded him back.(26) Another mother raised her son-in-law's little sister because his mother was a widow with a large family.(27)

Sometimes children were raised by relatives simply because of the overcrowded conditions at home. Mrs. BB's parents had four children in a one-bedroomed cottage. When the second boy was born his elder brother moved in with his grandparents who lived in the next block of cottages. The boy remained with his grandparents even when the parents moved with their other children into a two-bedroomed cottage. After serving in the army in the First World War, he returned to his grandmother.(28)

It was more usual for children to be farmed out to grandparents or aunts for shorter periods to tide the family over a temporary illness or overcrowding problem. Mrs. AK was sent to an aunt in Derby for six months when her mother was ill.(29) Mrs. BR's parents' two-bedroom cottage was bursting at the seams when it had to house mother, father, three daughters, a son-in-law and his small sister, and baby.

I can remember sleeping at both grandmothers. My father's mother was a strict disciplinarian. We was never spoiled, never in the wide world.(30)

Many young married women returned to their parents' homes to have their first babies, so that their mothers *could look after* them. For Mrs. AK's mother "mother" was the aunt who had raised her after her own mother died.

In those days you didn't go into hospital to have babies, you had them at home, and there was no one there to look after her or anything, and this was why she had to go back to her aunt for me to be born.(31)

Large families meant that women went on producing children until they were over forty. Therefore, many were widowed before they had raised their younger children. For example, Mrs. AN's husband died of asthma when his youngest daughter was 11(32) and Mrs. BD's husband, one of nine, was seven when his father died.(33) When Mrs BM's grandfather died young of TB, his widow, left with 11 young children, had to carry on the market garden until the boys could leave school and work full time.(34)

She was left with eleven to bring up. He was only ten when his father died. She carried on the business. (Did all the children work in the business?) All the boys did, the girls didn't. I think he had like consumption. There was a lot of TB about.(35)

Without the kin network, many of these widows would have been hard put to keep the family together. Mrs. AF's mother was left with eight children, none of whom were yet old enough to take over the father's market garden.

Father died of appendicitis. He was only 40 and my youngest sister was six weeks old. And you see having been self-employed, there was nothing like a pension or anything like that. I was still at school, but some of the others hadn't even started school.(36)

Fortunately her uncle had just retired from the metropolitan police and returned to Bretforton to live. He knew nothing about market gardening, but took over the accounting side of the business.

They employed somebody you see and he sort of took charge of paying the bills and that. And they managed...When he (Mrs. AF's father) died. It was in January - very, very cold, snow on the ground, and he was in the middle of digging his land, because there were no tractors in those days, or whatever. He was taken ill. He came home with these terrific pains. And of course there was a lot to do, many acres of it to be dug.(37)

Her father was chairman of the Legion in Bretforton. In addition to the kin network, such organisations brought aid in time of crisis.

Do you know...the whole of the Legion members turned out and they were spread across his land and finished that digging...And of course, he didn't have a pension.(38)

The family continued to support each other. After her uncle died her mother and his widow lived together.

My mother wasn't altogether happy about it because we were still a family and she was a bit bossy and that ..But it was a sort of good arrangement. Well my sister had got married and my aunt moved out and let her have her cottage to live in. I think that was one of the reasons. And then.. the brother next to me, he went in when he was old enough and took the land.(39)

In addition to being widowed, Mrs. AF's mother had to cope with illness.

My next brother when he was 14 ... he started work. We never really knew what happened, but he'd been plum picking and he'd fallen out of the tree and he'd hurt his knee, and he was limping. And to cut a long story short he'd got an abscess in the marrow of the bone, and do you know he didn't work for 5 years, and then one leg was shorter than the other because they had to take a piece out. The Legion were very good to him all that time. They got him one of those long - it was like a bed on wheels, a wicker thing with handles so that my mother could push him out and around in. The legion members used to get him books.(40)

Mrs. AF was anxious to point out that this was not charity:

I think people were very independent in those days. It wasn't done as charity, the Legion. We had to pay doctor's bills.(41)

Mrs. AF's mother died at 54, her youngest child was 14,

and she was at the grammar school then... I think we all sort of helped a bit - and my elder aunt and uncle who hadn't had any children.(42)

Another widow was left with a family of six. Her son worked in the family's market garden. She was better off than many widows because she inherited a stake in the business and she had a son out at work.

Unfortunately, I lost my father when I was sixteen - meningitis. He died at 43 in 1933. (How did your mother manage?) Oh she managed, and she went out to work (as domestic - cleaning and cooking.) The youngest was four, well I wasn't quite sixteen. I carried on with my uncles. Oh yes, well they did give her, well actually, two pound a week, because she left my father's money in there, so she

had an income. She had a widow's pension of ten shillings(43)

Mrs. BN's mother had the misfortune first of being widowed, after her husband had an accident in the navy in the First World War, and later of separating from her second husband.

Mother's first husband had an accident which eventually contributed to this, what they called TB hip, and eventually, of course, he died. She approached the British Legion and they said, the official wording was, "Undoubtedly Carter's injuries were originally caused by this fall", but because he had been out of the royal navy for three months when he was married to my mother, she didn't qualify for this widow's compensation...She had two little boys, and as she said they were in great need, and had it not been for granddad she'd have had a terrible struggle, well, she'd have been 'on the parish' as they called it.(44)

As was often the case, this aid from her father was reciprocated:

And then she looked after granny and granddad until he died. She couldn't unfortunately look after granny (when she died)..she had to go to hospital and she died in hospital. That always upset my mother. She always felt guilty.(45)

Mrs. BN was the child of her mother's second, unsuccessful, marriage. Her father was a groom, not used to the confines of market gardening. He suffered from shell-shock in the First World War and would fly into uncontrolled rages. He also had a drinking problem. After the separation he too received help from his kin.

Mother's second marriage, they split. I don't know the exact details because we were only small, but my dad went along to live with his dad. I always knew who my father was. but they separated.. (Did they officially divorce?) No they separated because they could only get divorced in those days for adultery and what was the other one? - which had to be proved. ..It wasn't because of anybody else it was because - well they just didn't get on. I mean dad

expected - my dad must have been getting on for forty, you see, when he married my mother - well he still went on hunting and doing his own thing and keeping his horse. Whilst mother was along the ground, dad was off doing his own thing, which people didn't do in those days.(46)

Not only death and separation threatened the happiness and security of the family, but also illness and accidents which befell the main breadwinner,

Second wives were often considerably younger than their husbands and were, therefore, particularly liable to this type of disaster. Miss BI's grandmother was 40 when she had her daughter.

When mother was two her father had a stroke and he laid for nine years. Well her mother had to take in people here. It was a hard life in those days, and he was upstairs, just lying. They couldn't do things for them in those days. Very little mother knew of her father. From two to eleven when her father died. They kept going afterwards by letting. I remember mother saying the rejoicing when the 7/6d came in - the old age pension. After she'd struggled for years.(47)

Mrs. AI's mother was also a second wife. She had five children.

My father who was very much older.. He had neuritis very badly and then diabetes. He was in bed for 12 months at one stage, so she really had to take over, well not the farm because there were men to work, but an uncle of mine, one of my father's brothers, he was a Londoner, but he came and stayed with us for 12 months to keep an eye on things, because we were only a young family you see.(48)

There was no compensation for industrial accidents. Mr. AO's father was also an invalid for years. He was a pioneer employee of the Gordon Russell Furniture Factory.

He went from the Top (Farm) there to the Lygon Arms and started doing the furniture and all that. that was built up then you see. (Mrs. BO) And he had something fall on his head. right up in an old barn they was in those days and they were getting it down and he was down below. (Mr. AO) He was dizzy. He went backwards and forwards. and went to hospital,. It gradually got worse. He couldn't get no compensation or nothing. ..My father suffered from blindness for a long time and he had to give up work.(49)

After a mother had raised her own family. indeed often while she was still raising them, she was responsible for looking after her aging parents. One respondent defined parents expectations of their children.

(Boys) They were wanted not only to work on the land but to work anywhere to bring in some money, though girls were wanted to looked after their mothers in their old age.(50)

Few widows could afford to live alone. few widowers could cope with household chores which they had never attempted before. Comments such as "my grandmother lived with my mother's youngest sister who was married. and she went and *made her home* with her"(51) cropped up continually. In return grandmothers often helped with the children and with the sewing and mending.

Having to look after an aged parent was very demanding.

Grandmother in London had a pretty serious accident and mother had to have her live here and she was a bit of a trial. That was later (when the girls had left home). (So as soon as your mother had finished raising her family she had to look after her mother?) Yes. oh yes. She was knocked down in Oxford Street. interfered with her mental...She'd say. "I'm off somewhere" and off she'd trot. Often found her up Broadway in one of the little pubs. Crown and Trumpet I think she'd try to get to. but she'd think they were the same as the places up in London. I think she thought she was there.(52)

Sometimes a parent was incapacitated.

My father's mother. she had a stroke. She was bed-ridden for 17 years. And my auntie, like my father's elder sister - she was a dear old soul - she looked after her for 17 years. And I mean she lost her husband, she'd got a young son and she used to take in washing too... The house was spotless and everything was just so you know. She was a marvellous old biddy.(53)

Mrs. BB's grandmother was bed-ridden for five years. Towards the end she required constant care. "For three months my mother and I sat up. One one night, one the other, for three months."(54)

With the cramped housing conditions and tight budgets there was often friction between the generations, particularly when the younger generation worked on the land owned by the parent.

When I was young we didn't get along badly, my mother and I, but in later years she was against me getting married. I looked after her when she got old... I remember telling her one day, she'd been grumbling all day long, I said, "For God's sake woman, count your blessings." The answer was, "I've got none to count". I daren't say, "You've got me", or she'd go up in the air and never come down... I did the work around the house and then went on the ground and then came back and cooked...She got along fairly well with my husband. They had a few arguments, of course. Lot of chaps wouldn't have wanted to live with her. If I had my time over again I'd see I didn't too! ..We had to live with my mother. She wasn't going to turn the house over to us - not on your life. When the ground was turned over she wanted money for all the crops in it. She paid a shilling a net to pick the sprouts. I had to keep a family on that.(55)

There was often friction between the grandparent and the grandchildren.

We had to have our old grandfather to live with us when his wife died you see. And we hated him. He'd got a walking stick and he used to sit in his armchair and he used to give his hardest when mother had gone to do some shopping. We'd got to do what he told us. She'd tell him what we'd got to do. We'd got to clean shoes and then I remember

once. he wouldn't ask my mother to mend his clothes: cord trousers they used to have in them days. didn't they. Oh he got me on mending his cord trousers when mother was gone. Oh. he was all right, but we thought he was awful.(56)

Sometimes girls had to return from service to look after their parents.

Grandfather died of senile dementia at 68. They all looked after him. Well, you had to in those days. ..My granddad was blind. He went blind when he was 37 and my granny died at 52 of cancer..Well my Auntie Nancy looked after him. She came back (from service) to look after him. Granny died when I was three. but in the meantime the two other aunts weren't married so they looked after him, and then auntie Nancy came back entirely to look after him and she moved into the house.(57)

Sometimes this service was of mutual benefit. A daughter with an illegitimate son looked after both her father and the boy.

His one daughter, after his wife had died, left service to look after him and he left the house to her...She had to give up her job and come home and look after her father because her son was living with the grandmother, you see. and the grandmother died with cancer in 1924.(58)

The intense interdependence of women on their families. and families on their mothers and daughters, could lead to tragedy as well as security. As families became smaller. transport improved and job opportunities became more varied. there was less likelihood that grown up children would settle in their own village.

Bob A**'s mother, Olive, committed suicide. Well she'd got an overactive thyroid, and it was the suicidal one. And all her family were married and they went away and I was expecting our Robert. Went down the road, and she said, "Oh ain't your mother lucky to have you round her". I said, "Well Peggy and Ernie are only a little way away." And she said, "It isn't the same". And all of a sudden in August she cleaned up the house from top to toe, put on the gas oven and sat in the chair and that was the end - they found her at lunch time.(59)

Even in such desperation the poor woman did not forget her duty as a good housewife.

One respondent started married life in a cottage in the village. They lived next to her in-laws. When her husband with the aid of a government grant in the 1920s built their own house on their market garden land outside the village. she recollects, "I hated living down there. it was so lonely. I had a nervous breakdown more or less." (60) The family returned to the village.

As Howard Newby noted, "co-operation in times of family crisis - childbirth, illness, death, unemployment - was an accepted code of behaviour which reinforced communal identity and involvement among a population which constantly lived under the shadow of poverty". (61) The extended family and the village milieu where everyone knew everyone gave women an intense feeling of "belonging" which was an integral part of their lives and which they grew up with from childhood, "I used to visit homes and call everybody aunty and uncle. I mean they were a lot of them distant relations." (62) Women grew up knowing their place in the extended family and the village. They knew that in times of need there would be aid available which gave them a sense of security in an otherwise harsh economic world. On the debit side the unpaid work of caring

competed for women's time and energy which could have been devoted to earning in order to supplement family income. From their childhood onwards women's caring role competed for time with their many other roles.

Footnotes to Chapter 8(a), Society's Safety Net

1. Story of our Village, Mickleton WI, (Evesham 1961) p.102.
2. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 384.
3. Story of our Village, Mickleton WI, (Evesham 1961) p. 102.
4. Harold Andrews, unpublished biography, p. 15.
5. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, (1961) p. 286.
6. Ward, Seasons of Change, (1982) p. 142.
7. Horn, Rural Life in England, (New York 1984) p. 218.
8. Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 237.
9. Archer, Muddy Boots and Sunday Suits, (1973) pp. 128, 129.
10. Mrs. BR
11. Chamberlain, Old Wives' Tales, (1981) p. 108.
12. Registry of Children, Evesham Union, Worcester Records Office.
13. Mrs. BG.
14. Mrs. AN.
15. Mrs. AF.
16. Excerpt from the Daily Express report of the first day of the pension payout, 1 January 1909.

Everyone asked everyone else, "Have you drawn your pension?" Old folks hobbling along the streets with

blue booklets tightly held in their hands were greeted by all the parish with the cheery cry, "Got your pension?" Most of them seemed to have blue booklets, which means that they were drawing the maximum of 5s a week, having, without the pension, an income of 8s a week or less.

17. Mrs. BR.
18. Mrs. AS.
19. Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 42.
20. Mr. AO.
21. W. H. Smiths' Household Almanac, (1909) p. 141.
22. Mrs. AS
23. Mr. AO, Mrs. BO.
24. Story of our Village 1850-1957, (Evesham 1961)
Mickleton WI.
25. Newby, The Deferential Worker, (1977) p. 38.
26. Kelly's Directory of Worcestershire (1896).
27. Mrs. AB.
28. Archer, Muddy Boots and Sunday Suits, (1973) p. 122.
29. Mrs. BR.
30. Joseph Arch felt that charity provided by the Church of England at the end of the nineteenth century kept villagers in their pews on Sunday and thus served the purpose of keeping the women and their families servile. If alternative support could have been found in time of illness,

The labourer's wife would not be so ready to come to the rectory back-door, humbly begging for food. Worse and worse still (from the vicar's point of view) she and the children might slip out of the yoke of church attendance altogether. (Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 34.)
31. Mrs. AE.
32. Arch, Joseph Arch, (1898) p. 41.

33. Ibid., p.xiii, preface.
34. W. & H. Smiths Household Almanac (1909).
35. Evesham Journal, January 9, 1910.
36. Mrs. AS.
37. Mr. AO.
38. Mrs. BR.
39. Mr. BQ.
40. Mrs. AG.
41. Mrs. BK.
42. Mrs. BH.
43. Mrs. AF.
44. Mrs. AK.
45. Mrs. AK.
46. Mrs. BG.
47. Mrs. AG.
48. Mrs. AP.
49. Mrs. AS.
50. Mrs. AE.
51. Mrs. AK.
52. Miss BE.
53. Mrs. AF.
54. Miss AQ.
55. Mr. AO.
56. Mr. AO.
57. Miss AQ.
58. Mrs. BR.

59. Mrs. AG.
60. Miss BI.
61. Miss BE.
62. Evesham Journal, January 8, 1910.
63. Miss BE.

Footnotes to Chapter 8(b), The Extended Family

1. Women were more likely to be widowed because they married at a younger age than men and lived longer than their husbands. They were less likely to remarry once widowed, especially if they had young children or dependent relatives. Their earnings were much lower than those of men and their work opportunities more limited ...Not surprisingly, many elderly women were reduced to seeking help from family and friends or charity from voluntary societies. Throughout this period, the dreaded workhouse with its rigid institutional regime and implications of shameful failure cast a shadow over their lives. (Davidoff and Westover, 'Women's World in England, 1880-1939', Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words, p. 4.)
2. Miss BJ.
3. Mr. AJ.
4. Horn, Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside, p. 182.
5. Ibid., p. 183.
6. Garnier, Annals of the British Peasantry, p. 421.
7. Mrs. BB.
8. Mr. AJ.
9. Mrs. BH.
10. Mrs. BR.
11. Mr. AD.
12. Mrs. BM.
13. Miss BJ.

14. Mrs. BC.
15. Mr. AD.
16. Mrs. BM.
17. Mrs. BL.
18. Miss AQ.
19. Mrs. AP.
20. Mrs. BR.
21. Mrs. AS.
22. Mrs. AS.
23. Mrs. AK.
24. Mr. BQ.
25. Mr. BQ.
26. Miss BJ.
27. Mrs. BR.
28. Mrs. BB.
29. Mrs. AK.
30. Mrs. BR.
31. Mrs. AK.
32. Mrs. AN.
33. Mrs. BD.
34. Mrs. BM.
35. Mrs. BM.
36. Mrs. AF.
37. Mrs. AF.
38. Mrs. AF.
39. Mrs. AF.

40. Mrs. AF.
41. Mrs. AF.
42. Mrs. AF.
43. Mr. AJ.
44. Mrs. BN.
45. Mrs. BN.
46. Mrs. BN.
47. Miss BI.
48. Mrs. AI.
49. Mr. AO, Mrs. BO.
50. Mrs. AS.
51. Mrs. AF.
52. Mr. AO.
53. Mrs. AG
54. Mrs. BB.
55. Mrs. BR.
56. Mrs. BG.
57. Mrs. AM.
58. Mr. AJ.
59. Mrs. AM.
60. Mrs. AE.
61. Newby, The Deferential Worker, p. 46.
62. Mrs. AS.

CONCLUSION

Viewed from a feminist historical perspective village working class women's lives were narrowly circumscribed by class and gender. They were educated to provide a reservoir of cheap labour in a very limited variety of gender-specific employments - domestic service, sewing, and some forms of field work - which had no labour organisation or bargaining power. Their role within the home can be perceived as a monotonous round of drudgery under primitive conditions to stretch a low family income in order keep their families fed, sheltered and clothed. They had little control over their own fertility. Up to the First World War families of up to 13 children were reported, and though the birthrate dropped in the 1920s. agricultural labourers were the last major group to limit their families. While adult male villagers had been enfranchised in 1884. country women's political awareness was so low that there was no agitation for political participation. When the vote was finally achieved, their voting patterns often mirrored those of their husbands or employers. Their upbringing in home. school and church had taught them to accept their status at the bottom of the political and social hierarchy. Even in such village women's institutions as the Women's Institute and the Mothers' Union they acquiesced in being led by the aristocracy and the middle classes.

However, as Karen Olson and Linda Shopes argue, the findings of oral history research amongst working class women makes it necessary to "rethink women's history in less categorical, more dynamic terms" than the "feminist biases" which formerly shaped analysis.(1) Patricia Hilden has pointed out "perspectives are kaleidoscopic; any twist of the glass and everything changes".(2)

This study demonstrates that village women themselves did not perceive themselves as powerless. Their housekeeping role included the power of the purse and in contrast to middle class women they, in addition to their men, were earners and providers. While following separate spheres in work and leisure, their managerial role within the family and their pivotal role within the extended family provided the means by which their families could cope with low incomes and harsh living conditions. Though they were self-sacrificing, they were not merely "angels in the home", the role ascribed to many of their middle class counterparts. They were often tough matriarchs, or as one respondent reported "almost tyrants".(3)

While, as noted in the literature review, contemporary middle class observers such as B. Seebohm Rowntree, Helen Bosanquet, Margery Spring Rice and Magdalen Stuart Pember Reeves, had chronicled in detail the poverty of working-class families from the pre-World War I to the pre-World War II

period, they could not help but interpret their findings from a middle class reformer's viewpoint. It was not until Dr. Roberts's oral research into urban working class women's lives that the limited perception of the outsider was replaced by accounts of how women perceived their own lives.

In the conclusions of this study of rural working class women in the period 1890 to 1940, it is, therefore, interesting to consider the wider implications of the findings by summarising them and then comparing them with those of Elizabeth Roberts in her detailed oral study of urban working-class women in the same period. In the introduction of her study she wrote that the analysis of her findings "could well have a wider significance".(4) Were there significant similarities in the findings of Dr. Roberts's study, based on central and north Lancashire and in particular the towns of Barrow, Lancaster and Preston and this study based on villages in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire within a ten-mile radius of Broadway? Comparisons will also be made with the other works mentioned in chapter 1, A Survey of Research, including writers specialising in agriculture, women's and social history.

In considering the influence of their social background on village women, the role of the church, the concepts of class and social status, and the role of the family were examined. It

was found that outside the family, the church was a dominant influence on women's lives. reinforcing the family's social norms, its station in society, patriotism and moral values and upholding the rigid division of gender roles. The parson, the school master, the doctor and the local gentry were still addressed as "sir". Gender and class roles were reflected in the offices bestowed by the church. Fathers of respondents could be made church wardens, but if their mothers had an office it was as church cleaner. While Sunday school teachers were often female, they were almost invariably from the middle class. Some respondents, growing up in the 1930s, reported they found their mothers' respectful address to the vicar demeaning, but few women questioned the role assigned to them by the church, while most village women enjoyed the social aspects of religion and many found comfort in its teachings.

It was an important part of a mother's role to inculcate her children with Christian precepts. Christianity was equated with respectability. Religion was practised in the home, and children were taught to say their prayers. They were also sent to Sunday school, where they were imbued with the work ethic as well as the New Testament injunction to love thy neighbour and the Old Testament concept of sin, justice, and punishment. While most women were members of the Church of England, the chapel was influential in some open villages. It was markedly more democratic and often appealed to the more independent as

well as the poorer members of the village, while children were attracted by the chapel outings. Many village schools were church schools; religion was an important part of the curriculum and children were examined in religious knowledge during school inspection by the vicar. Joseph Arch's view of the Church of England in the *nineteenth century as an instrument of the class system which preached subordination of the working class*(5) was less obvious in the twentieth century but the pre-ordained nature of an individual's place in society and the need for meek acceptance of this by the children of the poor remained part of the message they received from the pulpit.

Roberts found that religion also played an important role in the area of her study. She refutes Standish Meacham's argument that religion was losing its slim hold on the urban working-class before the First World War.(6) While a religious census by the Daily News in metropolitan London in 1902-03 demonstrated that the majority of the working class were non-attenders (830,00 worshippers, compared with 1.4 million non-attenders) in the northern towns religion retained its influence. Like the village women her respondents reported that "it provided a fundamental underpinning and comfort in what were often hard and troubled lives."(7)

The concept of class and social status was complex. In the smaller "open" villages with few large houses, market gardening gave former labourers and their families a certain independence despite reports of poverty. Though the gentry might still remain their landlords they were no longer their direct employers. In some villages only the vicar, doctor and school teacher were thought of as belonging to a different class. However, in fashionable Broadway with its large houses occupied by affluent middle class and aristocratic families, and in villages which still had a resident squire, there was a rigid social division. From the turn of the century a new economic powerful elite of business began replacing the old landed gentry and it was reported that these energetic newcomers were the most active in organising practical paternalistic help for villagers. Mothers taught their children to respect the ruling social elite; often their husbands' jobs, their housing, their own employment as part-time domestics, laundresses and sewers, and the future employment of their daughters as servants were dependent on the patronage of the gentry. The younger generation, growing up in the 1930s, began to question what they saw as their mothers' servility, though they still mentioned having "respect". Social class was generally a static concept, only a few successful shopkeepers and market gardeners were upwardly mobile. None of the women interviewed would have considered marriage outside their own class. Newby's comment that the social hierarchy of the village was best stabilized by

"persuading those in subordinate positions to subscribe to the system which endorsed their own inferiority"(8) appears to be confirmed, despite the questioning attitude of some of the younger generation in the 1930s.

Elizabeth Roberts found evidence of urban class antagonism where women were employed in large industrial organisations in which there were no direct personal bonds between employer and employee, but she also found evidence of hierarchical deference, paternalism and co-operation.(9)

The home was the most important influence on the socialisation of the children. Here girls were conditioned to subordinate their own wills and ambitions to the good of the family. Respondents helped their mothers with housework, child-minding, cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking, washing up and mending, whilst their brothers took on the outside jobs such as bringing in fuel and helping with the allotment. If their mother was ill it was usual for girls to be kept home from school to look after younger siblings.

The prevailing ideology that women's sphere was in the domestic domain and men's in the outside world was as strong in urban areas.

Fundamentally whatever else a woman might do in her life, the ultimate responsibility for the daily care of the home and family lay with her, and not the male members of the

household. While girls acted as apprentices to their mothers, or even as their substitutes, boys were more likely to be out of the house ..(10)

At home village children learned unquestioned obedience. Because families were large, parents felt strict discipline was necessary to maintain control. This was reinforced by hand, cane, riding whip, and leather strap. However it was found that not all children experienced *corporal punishment*. Often the mere threat was sufficient, and from the 1920s onward - perhaps because families were becoming smaller - the disciplinary smack began to replace harsher methods. All children, however, learned not to answer back or question authority. Neighbours and kin played an important role in *socialising and disciplining* children. Outside the house children enjoyed a sense of freedom. Lanes and fields were safe playing areas. Market gardening and farming was still labour intensive so there were neighbours and relatives about in the fields. There was little traffic, except in Broadway, and busy mothers were glad to have their children out from beneath their feet.

This appears to have been the common experience in urban areas too. Elizabeth Roberts reports similar disciplinary methods (omitting the riding whip!) and observes that the urban working-class child usually belonged to an extended family as well as a nuclear one, through which women played a dominant part in the socialisation of children.(11) Even in urban

areas, children were "allowed to play outside freely during the day".(12)

In school, discipline and social conformity were also stressed. Discipline was usually strict. In addition to teaching the three "Rs", vocational training was provided. The boys were prepared for their role as breadwinners by handicrafts like carpentry. Girls were prepared for their domestic role by lessons in domestic economy: sewing (including mending), knitting, laundry work and cookery. Village schools were often very basic, frequently one room divided into two classes. Many rural children had a long walk to school and in bad weather they were often absent. In addition, as mentioned earlier, girls were sometimes kept home to help when their mothers were ill; boys were absented to work in the fields at busy periods.

The financial needs of the family dictated that both boys and girls left school as early as possible to contribute to the family purse. There were many instances of very able children being forced to leave school because of family poverty and the need for their earnings or labour. A fatalistic attitude to this sacrifice was expressed time and again - "You're not asked what you want to do. The family need you so you get on with it," as one respondent expressed it.(13) There was little career planning. Girls took whatever job was available.

As mentioned in chapter 3(d), in policy debates on state primary education, the schoolteacher's role was defined as "an instrument for social discipline, who would combat pauperism, induce self-respect and reduce the high levels of urban and rural crime".(14) In urban areas parents also "expected firmness, and a reinforcement of the habits of obedience, respectability and hard work, first learned at home".(15) Like their country counterparts, urban children usually ended their schooling at 13 or 14. Here again, "familial considerations were of much greater importance than were individualistic ones."(16)

The acceptance of the tight constraints which society, class and gender imposed was thus reinforced by the teachings of the home, community, school and church. Village girls had a very narrow choice of opportunities. The study confirmed that domestic service was the only occupation available for most girls, except shop-work, field-work or gloving (though the latter two occupations were mainly the province of married women). Girls in service moved around the country, changing positions fairly frequently in their search for better pay, more congenial employers, and advancement. Apart from the few who were able to continue their education, there was little difference in the school leaving age during the whole period studied. Most left at 14, though those born before 1910 often

left at 13. The girls started as maids-of-all work, housemaids, kitchenmaids, and scullery-maids, the bottom ranks of the servant hierarchy. Kin and village networks were frequently consulted by mothers *in order to find employment for* their daughters. For those who remained single or delayed marriage it was possible to graduate from kitchen maid, to undercook, and finally to cook/housekeeper, a responsible and often arduous job.

Jane Lewis states that domestic service and fieldwork remained the only two options open to the majority of rural women until after World War II.(17) This oral study demonstrated that there were alternatives (see chapter 4) but that the majority of girls entered service. Lewis contends that the resurgence of domestic service during the interwar years (it was one of the few sectors which experienced a labour shortage) was aided by government policy. Thus successive governments supported the notion that this was the "natural" place for working class girls and it was the only field for which a retraining scheme was offered to unemployed women during the inter-war period. She found "more explicit or implicit criticisms of the paternalistic and deferential relations which characterised the job were forthcoming during the inter-war years"(18) and this study confirms this finding. Some girls in this period moved out of the private domestic market and into the growing catering industry.

If the rural girls' work opportunities are compared with those of their urban counterparts, a clear contrast emerges. In the textile districts of the industrial north, access to wages in the mill gave young women greater independence. Most went into weaving. They earned higher wages than country girls and could continue to live at home. Few chose to go into service where alternative employment was available. *Amongst Roberts's* respondents far more mothers had been living-in domestic servants than had their daughters.(19) and she notes that service "seems to have lost status in the eyes of some working women". She observes that "the vast majority of respondents' mothers who were domestic servants were originally from the countryside", but later in Barrow during the Depression the shortage of other work forced some girls into service. Already by 1916 the Women's Industrial Council commented on the "social stigma attached to such employment amongst the urban population".(20) Domestic service remained the largest employment group for women in England, followed by employment in the production of textiles and clothing. The majority of girls in both studies, therefore, left school to enter the two largest groups of female employment.

It was found that the villages did offer some local employment opportunities, but these were mostly for married women. Few single women were employed in the gloving industry

which remained important in certain villages, and it was becoming less common for single girls to be employed on the land, especially in market gardening. It was not until towards the end of the period that the first village women became clerical workers. Shopwork was reported, especially in family businesses. The entry of single middle class women into nursing, teaching and midwifery meant a decrease in the number of village girls entering these fields. The bursary system of teacher training was introduced in 1907 which meant that aspiring teachers had to stay at school until they were 17. Formal training for midwifery was introduced in 1902 and extended in 1916, 1924 and 1937. Nursing was similarly "upgraded" to a predominantly middle class occupation by the policy of lowering training salaries. Though many girls dreamt of becoming nurses when young, the period of training during which they could not send home wages to their families was an effective barrier. Nor was there a realistic hope of greater long-term rewards by such sacrifice of immediate earning power, for the marriage bar in force during the 1920s and 1930s, meant those few girls who had been able to achieve careers in teaching, nursing or the civil service had to withdraw from their work upon marriage.

Marriage rather than a career was the implicit goal of most girls' training. In her urban study Elizabeth Roberts found that "the universal assumption was that a decade or so after

leaving school they would marry, give up work, and raise a family, a view shared by the great majority of the respondents and their families.(21) However, because of the widespread poverty amongst working class families, both rural and urban, "giving up work" often meant exchanging full-time waged labour for part-time waged work in addition to full-time unpaid domestic work for the family.

Many women continued to marry men from the same village or locally as many of their parents had done before them, choice of partner being limited to residents of villages within bicycling or walking distance. Some of the smaller villages were inbred and insular with three or four family names reoccurring constantly. Many families were interrelated, though by the end of the period marriage with even second cousins was increasingly discouraged. However, in most villages *there were* large houses which brought girls in service into the village and introduced more choice. Girls who had been away in service also brought partners back to the villages. The Gordon Russell factory in Broadway drew a workforce from many parts. Marriage was usually a quiet and practical affair. Many had to wait a long time to be married, as it was difficult to find housing and difficult to save money, since parents expected grown children to contribute a large part of their earnings to the family budget.

Rural women who were born before the First World War usually reported a large number of siblings. Farm labourers, market gardeners, and small farmers all produced the same size families, with an average of nine children. After 1910 there was a difference in the number of children born to farm labourers and market gardeners, the families of the former remaining larger until the 1930s, as discussed in chapter 5a. After 1930 there was a large drop in the size of families for all categories, the majority of families having two children. Urban families began to limit their children earlier than rural, though in both areas it was the skilled workers who led this movement.

As pregnancy and sex were taboo subjects, which neither urban nor rural respondents discussed with their parents, it is difficult to research such family planning as there was. Most respondents reported a fatalistic attitude to frequent pregnancies, "You had babies, or you didn't. It was just your luck, wasn't it".(22)

As noted in chapter 6a, agricultural workers earned between 13s and 14s per week in Worcestershire around 1890, by 1907 this had increased to 17s 11d, 15s 11d being in cash and 2s in extras. By 1918 they were earning 30s, ten shillings below the average labouring wage. With the slump agricultural wages sunk to 28s until the Wages Boards were reintroduced. Wages

then rose to 32s in 1925, the year in which A. L. Bowley and M. H. Hogg estimated that an expenditure of 37s 6d was needed to keep a family of five above the poverty line.(23) Therefore the pivotal role of the village mother as housewife and manager of the family budget was frequently acknowledged. They were raised to put everyone else first but were, nevertheless, the prevalent spirit in the house, often managing children and husband alike. Mothers were constantly praised for being "good managers". Husbands and older children handed over their earnings and were doled out pocket money. The success of women's financial management depended on the family income not just on their husbands' wages.

Roberts's research demonstrated a similar position was occupied by urban wives. In the majority of marriages,

the woman exerted significant power, not so much from legal rights as from moral force. Although the source of her power was moral, it could and did give her considerable economic control over the family".(24)

She was the keeper of the family purse and "'good' husbands were expected to hand over their wages without any deductions having been made". In addition "all earning children gave their wages to their mother for her to dispose of as she thought best".(25) Helen Bosanquet, in her study of urban working-class families, wrote in 1906,

Generally speaking they (i.e. the women) expect to have and they get the entire management of the family income, in many cases determining even the amount which the wage-earners, husband, son and daughter alike, reserve for their own use.(26)

Despite all such labour and the economies practised by the mother as financial manager of the family purse, the low wages and uncertainties of her husband's employment meant that many families were in debt, sometimes to the local pawnbroker in the town, and in both town and country to the local shop. In the countryside, T. Seebohm Rowntree wrote of the heavy burden of debt incurred by most of the families interviewed in his 1912-1913 survey.(27) This was confirmed by oral evidence. Debt was feared but was resorted to as an expedient in bad times by wives of small market gardeners and labourers right up through the 1930s. The bread-bill often had to wait until the harvest. Asparagus was a good crop for obtaining credit: bills were paid off when the "grass" came in. Shopkeepers reported having to give extensive credit not only to market gardeners, but to families who had little chance of catching up on their debts. Debt to small shopkeepers who were often neighbours, friends, potential employers for children, and sometimes relatives could be detrimental to the family's good name.

The dominant role of the working class mother within the family transcended geographic location and the comments of Roberts's respondents match those of this study. She emphasizes the importance of this role as manager.

Unlike the middle class wife, the working class wife was an economic necessity to her husband, she was indispensable. If she did not do the housework he could not afford to pay

anyone else to do it. Indeed if the wife died it was a lucky man who could escape breaking up his home."(28)

As discussed in chapter 5, when life was hard only the privileged could be "gentle" women. These women had not been reared to be fragile, helpless females, but as workers who could turn their hand to many chores.

The concept of "respectability" was a guiding force for both rural and urban working class families. Its precepts divided the "respectable" families from the "rough". Drunkenness and debt were the main threats to this moral code. It would appear from urban research that drunkenness was more prevalent before the First World War as Government restrictions of public house opening hours were introduced in 1915 to aid the war effort, while taxes were increased and the potency of beer was reduced. However, in the countryside, where homemade wine and cider was popular, drinking remained a problem until the Second World War brought sugar rationing.

Rural families "lived off the land" with as much home-produced food as possible. They usually had large gardens and/or allotments on which they grew vegetables and fruit, kept chickens and a pig. The pig was an essential part of the family economy. The poorer families reported buying the runt of the litter. Many families belonged to a pig club, which insured their investment and provided wholesale pig food. When

the pig was killed, much was salted but small joints and offal were shared with other families and this was reciprocated later. In this way fresh meat was enjoyed for a longer period.

It is interesting to note how many urban families also had allotments (one-third of Barrow families, and half those in Lancaster) where a minority even kept pigs and hens. Rabbitting was also a pastime for men in the mill towns as it was in the villages.(29)

Food was solid and filling: stews, soups and broths, and porridge. Tinned milk was often substituted for fresh in the country as well as the town because of its cheapness. Bread and potatoes were the staple foods of working-class diets. Bread retained its prime importance throughout the period; 6-7 lbs per head per week was the national average consumption in 1900. (30) In the northern urban areas the tradition of the housewife baking bread continued until the inter-war period as it did in East Anglian villages.(31) However, in the Worcestershire and Gloucestershire villages studied it was only reported on farms (perhaps because they were excluded from the bakers' rounds) or where mothers had been employed as cooks before their marriage. The tradition of wine-making and cider brewing, on the other hand, remained strong in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire until the Second World War, while urban workers relied on the beer provided by the local pub.

Urban workers' food was similarly filling. While Roberts reports that mill women working full-time relied on convenience foods - tripe, meat pies and fish and chips - and few vegetables were consumed, in general, she defends working-class women from middle-class accusations that they were not skilled in the selection and cooking of food.(32)

In providing the children's clothing women relied on "make-do and mend" in both town and country. As Elizabeth Roberts notes,

Although changes and developments in household equipment had hardly touched the working-class home in general before the first world war, it was quite common for working-class women to have sewing-machines.(33)

In the country many girls saved up for a sewing machine while in service. Garments for the family were made from discarded clothes. Clothes were less subject to the whims of fashion than in the towns. In Preston Roberts reports that ready-made clothes were already becoming a status symbol.(34) In both areas respondents often resorted to jumble sales. The provision of shoes and boots was a problem often solved, like clothing, by passing down.

The study found that rural housing was often deplorable. Though Medical Health Officers were given new powers to inspect rural housing by the 1890 and 1909 Housing Acts, the Broadway Parish Council in 1906 complained that these very bye laws made

it impossible for private persons to build cottages which working men could afford to rent. "When cottages have been condemned the cost of bringing them up to standard are so heavy that they remain derelict." A particular problem in Broadway was that with the influx of the middle classes, "former cottages are combined to make houses." (35)

While shopkeepers and the more successful market gardeners enjoyed relatively good housing, most village housing remained at a very primitive standard. The absence of piped water, electricity and often gas made women's domestic work heavy and time-consuming. Housing was usually rented or tied to the husband's job. Many respondents grew up in the cottages of the type of which the Government Commissioners complained as conducive to ill-health and immorality, being damp and often chronically overcrowded, housing not only the immediate family but often relatives as well. Uncertainty of tenancy and lack of money discouraged the families from carrying out repairs, and low rents discouraged landlords from doing so.

Some estate cottages, for example, those on the model estate of Buckland Manor, were three-bedroomed, but even here tenants were moved at the whim of the agent. Most cottages had two bedrooms, but some only consisted of two rooms, one with the upper rooms being reached by a ladder. Children shared beds, sometimes four to a bed - two at the top, two at the

bottom - but despite middle class concern about the immorality of overcrowding, it was found that families practised as strict a segregation of the sexes as was possible. Sometimes children were sent to sleep at relatives'; in one case the boys were sent to sleep in the derelict cottage next door.

Water supply was a problem. It was a time-consuming duty for women and children to fetch water from the village taps, usually shared by many cottages. Washhouses were often shared between two or three cottages. Bathrooms and indoor plumbing were late arrivals in most villages, and respondents reported the weekly ritual of the tin bath in front of the fire on a Saturday night. The outhouse down the garden, near the pigsty, accommodated the toilets which were sometimes shared with neighbours. It was still unusual to have indoor plumbing before the Second World War.

In comparison to the old housing, the new council houses which were built in the 1920s and 1930s were well equipped. By the mid-thirties those in Wickhamford had gas, electricity, and an indoor toilet. Gas and electricity were late in being introduced to rural districts. Gas started to arrive in the 1930s, but it was not until the 1950s that some villages had electricity.

Most of Roberts's respondents grew up in small terraced houses and the problem of overcrowding was exacerbated by urban social mores which required that the front room was kept as a parlour for use on special occasions only. As in the country, overcrowding meant,

that as much time as possible was spent outside; children played in the streets, men went to the pub, women (and men) sat on chairs by their front doors in good weather and chatted to neighbours".(36)

The problems of housekeeping in such an environment were similar in town and village. Accounts of housekeeping given by respondents are very similar. The towns enjoyed the earlier introduction of such amenities as piped water, gas and sanitation, but suffered from smoke and grit from crowded housing and factories. In town as well as country, it was only the new council houses in the 1920s and 1930s which had "the luxury of a proper bathroom and a proper hot water system".(37) Even in urban areas Roberts found that "few working-class homes had any mechanical aids to alleviate the burden of housework before 1940."(38)

In all but one of the rural families, it was reported that the man's income was augmented by the labour of their wives and children. Often women who had been in service continued domestic work as "dailies". Some mothers were shopkeepers, either helping in the family shop or with "front room" shops of their own. Three mothers and one grandmother worked as

"untrained" midwives, and nurses, and helped lay out the dead. In addition they and others took in washing, did sewing, and plucked fowls. One mother was a professional dressmaker. In Broadway several women took in lodgers, or ran tea-rooms. The traditional local industry of gloving remained important in some of the villages, especially Childswickham and Willersey, and women spent long hours at their gloving donkeys. Many married women worked on the land, often for relatives in market gardening. Some did heavy work such as digging, lifting turnips and potatoes, in addition to "women's" work such as hoeing, weeding and picking. Many combined several part-time jobs, both land-work and domestic, to eke out the family income.

In the northern mill towns some women continued to work full-time, but most worked on a casual, part-time basis as needed by the family to supplement their husband's low wages. As in the country, their "aims and ambitions were family-centred".(39) "Women worked not for themselves but for their families, familialistic concerns were of abiding importance, individualistic ones were not."(40) In the towns the middle class ideal extolled by "experts" such as medical officers, and health visitors, of mothers staying at home and devoting themselves to caring for their families full time was beginning to find adherents, especially amongst skilled workers who earned a "family" wage. This contrasts with the village study, where only one example was found where the husband explicitly

endorsed the new principle. This was in 1937, near the end of the period studied, and significantly the husband was a skilled workman at the Gordon Russell factory in Broadway.

Most of the women's part-time jobs in both rural and urban areas were an extension of their domestic labour and were often carried on in the home. They included sewing, cleaning, cooking, taking in washing, accommodating and cooking for lodgers, and caring for others. They therefore conformed to the ideal of women's role being in the domestic sphere and were common to both town and country. As Elizabeth Roberts pointed out, many were self-employed "penny capitalists" - washerwomen, dressmakers, shop-keepers, child minders, and landladies.(41)

Many respondents were employed in the homes of the middle classes, who were the first to benefit from the introduction of gas, water and electricity and to be equipped with up-to-date stoves, kitchens, toilets and bathrooms. Working class women, therefore, while struggling to run their own primitive homes, also contributed their labour as dailies, kitchen help and laundresses to more leisured women who lived in better equipped, labour saving, housing. It is interesting to note, however, that the rural gentry, while often pioneers in installing central heating, gas, and electricity, were slow in updating their kitchens because they never used these areas of

the house themselves, relying before the Second World War on armies of working class girls to staff them.

For most women, as Elizabeth Roberts found, there was a "blurring of the public and private divisions in their lives with regard to work".(42) Much of it was within the family, unpaid and private, some of the work was in the public sphere in regular paid work for an outside employer. But

In many cases, however, they earned money, thus making themselves part of the labour market and part of the public sphere, and yet this work was nevertheless carried out in the private sphere of the home. For the women who had shops in their home the blurring of the difference between public and private spheres was complete.(43)

It was found that apart from the occasional whist drive and dance, leisure was often as rigidly segregated by gender as economic roles. Organised sport became popular in the period studied, but was almost exclusively a male leisure occupation. Village bands were all male. Even the ancient tradition of mummers' plays kept up until the late 1920s in Snowhill had an all-male cast. While in urban areas some women regularly patronised the pub,(44) social drinking remained strictly a male prerogative in the country, the men congregating around the cider barrel in their sheds, or going down to the pub. It is significant that the only women who frequented a pub was a grandmother who was an ex-Londoner.

Only the more successful tradesmen families in Broadway enjoyed a varied social life. However, women enjoyed much informal social contact. Glovers would sit outside to work in good weather, children were taken out in the pram, the village shop was a centre of gossip. One social organisation, in addition to the church, which was attended by all classes of village women was the Women's Institute, and their outings became very popular. The Mothers' Union also provided talks and outings. Both the Women's Institute and the Mothers' Union was led by the gentry during this period. The most common family leisure activity was a visit to grandparents or other family members who lived close by. The spread of bicycle ownership helped extend the area which could be visited. Holidays were almost unknown except for visits to relatives, and often it was the children rather than their parents who enjoyed such breaks. Wakes and mops provided the traditional "day out" for the whole family, as did the Cotswold Hunt point-to-points.

Many families took newspapers, especially in the 1920s and 1930s - but few women had much time for reading. The most revolutionary advance in the provision of entertainment and news was the wireless, which began to become common in the 1920s and 1930s. In urban areas women had more access to commercial leisure (cinemas and dansehalls). However, David Fowler points out that this catered more to the youth market.(45) Commercial street life still provided the most

common venue for socialising for married women with families(46)

Working class women and children remained amongst the poorest members of the population. While there were village charities and the Victorian principle of "self-help" had led to the establishment of village friendly societies, there was little state provision apart from the Poor Law, and the old age pension introduced in 1909. Farm workers were excluded from the National Unemployment Insurance schemes until 1936 (see chapter 8a) as were their daughters who were employed as domestic servants. The National Health Insurance Act of 1911 did not extend its cover to the family so that illness was not only an emotional strain but a financial one. Throughout the period studied a married women had no access to free medical attention except for pre-natal and post-natal check-ups. Barbara Wootton states "women in fact were treated as mere breeding machines".(47) Consequently if women were sick they often called in the doctor as a last resort. There is little evidence to suggest any real improvement in working class wives' health by the Second World War. Margery Spring Rice's health survey of 1,250 urban and rural working class wives in 1939 classed only 31.3 per cent as in apparently good health, while 31.2 per cent were in "very grave" health.(48) While successive acts between 1902 and 1936 raised the standards and qualifications required for midwives, nurses and health visitors, untrained midwives,

often neighbours and friends (see chapter 6b) were frequently reported as attending rural women at childbirth; they were cheaper than the doctor and the district nurse. This practise was also common in urban areas.(49) Home remedies were passed on from one generation of women to another. Women suffered from problems connected with frequent pregnancy, goitres (Worcestershire neck) tuberculosis, rheumatism and arthritis.

It was the kin network which women relied on in time of sickness, or crisis, and it was women who were the chief providers of this mutual aid. While divorce was rare, death of a spouse was more common. When wives died their place was taken by elder daughters, grandmothers and aunts. Sometimes the families were split up and dispatched to various relatives. Occasionally children were raised by relatives simply because of overcrowded homes; or they were farmed out to tide the family over a temporary illness. Many young married women returned to their parents' homes to have their first babies so that their mother could look after them. Large families meant that women produced children until they were over forty and consequently many were widowed before they had raised younger children. Second wives were often considerably younger than their husbands and were particularly liable to be widowed. Without the kin network they could not have kept the family together.

As Diana Gittens notes, such strategies were conceived in terms of "survival for the family household generally rather than for the individual woman".(50) Country women shared this necessity for mutual family aid with their urban counterparts.

Working-class women did not live exclusively within the confines of a nuclear family, but were members of neighbourhood groups and extended families. These groups were of great importance in working-class lives, giving social and material support, and providing a strict system for establishing and maintaining social mores. They were operated largely, but not exclusively, by women.(51)

After a mother had raised her own family, and often before, she became responsible for looking after her aging parents, a demanding job if the parent was incapacitated. Few widows could afford to live alone, few widowers could cope.

Even for those receiving unemployment benefits during the economic depression of the inter-war years, as Roberts notes, the allowances were so small that the "Public Assistance Officers in the 1930s, could not square the circle of family needs and family responsibilities...It became a rule that a man could only claim for his wife and dependent children".(52) The law, however, "from the passing of the Poor Law Act in 1601 until the Public Assistance Act of 1946, placed upon the extended family an obligation to support its members; parents were responsible for their children, adult children for their parents, and grandparents were responsible for grandchildren".(53) In practice these obligations to the

extended family were acknowledged by the women if not the state. The intense interdependence of women on their families, and families on their mothers and daughters, gave a sense of security in an otherwise harsh economic world, and were the necessary means of coping with poverty, illness and death. Howard Newby pointed out that the village working class "neighbourly community of kin and workmates" was "not dissimilar to that which existed in many urban working class neighbourhoods" and was sustained by "strong kinship links between the village inhabitants and by the need for cooperation in times of family crisis." (54)

Roberts found that those women who were conscious of their exploitation interpreted it in terms of class rather than gender conflict. Urban women, like their men, were more involved in the Labour movement than their rural counterparts, though only 11 out of 160 respondents in Robert's survey were actively engaged in the Labour Party.

Despite the success of Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation, and the involvement of working class women in north-east Lancashire, (55) working-class women did not generally appear to identify the solution of their problems with the political representation of women. Cadbury wrote in 1906 that "comparatively few working women at any rate appreciate the agitation for political privilege". (56) The

suffrage movement had no interest for the women in either sample. Roberts found only two women involved in this movement amongst the 160 families in her survey. To working class women in the country this issue seems to have been equally irrelevant to their lives. Only one respondent had a relative who was interested in suffrage and she, significantly, lived not in the country but in Birmingham, where she had "posh friends".(57) Two daughters of a member of the gentry in Broadway were activists, but working women "just didn't have the time" to be interested in the vote.

Though there were marked improvements in working class standards of living in the 1930s when real wages rose and, perhaps even more important, family size began to fall,

Throughout the period under discussion (1890-1940), very many working-class women struggled to find the means to clothe, house and feed their families. Their husbands' wages alone were insufficient for these purposes and so they had to find ways both of supplementing their incomes and spending them as economically as possible. These various methods of balancing families' budgets may be termed 'strategies' and they included: married women working part- or full-time; relying on children's wages; exerting the most rigid control over their household budgets; using the products of their families' allotments; and borrowing both goods and cash.(58)

A working class woman's "place" in the country, as in the town, was very much at the centre of her family within the framework of a kin and neighbourhood network. It would appear that class, poverty and gender were constraints which had more

bearing upon their lives than the urban or rural context in which they lived.

Footnotes to Conclusion

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2. Patricia Hilden. "Women's History - the Second Wave". The Historical Journal. 1982.
3. Mrs. AS.
4. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) p. 6.
5. See footnote 1. chapter 3b.
6. Meacham. A Life Apart: The English Working Class 1890-1914. (1977) p. 6.
7. Roberts. A Woman's Place, (Oxford 1984) p. 4.
8. Newby. The Deferential Worker. (1977) p. 48.
9. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) pp. 46. 47.
10. Ibid... p. 17.
11. Ibid.., p. 10.
12. Ibid.., p. 13.
13. Mrs. AB.
14. Horn. Education in Rural England. (1978) p. 53.
15. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) p. 26.
16. Ibid... p. 34.
17. Lewis. Women in England. (Brighton 1984) p. 157.
18. Ibid.
19. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) p. 54.

20. Higgs. "Domestic Service and Household Production. in (ed.) Angela V. John. Women's Employment in England. (1986) p. 142.
21. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) p. 53.
22. Mrs. AF.
23. Quoted Roberts. "Women's Strategies". in Jane Lewis (ed) Labour and Love. (1986) p. 224.
24. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) p. 110.
25. Ibid.
26. Bosanquet. The Family. (1906) p. 199.
27. Rowntree & Kendall. How the Labourer Lives (1913).
28. Roberts. "Working Class Women in the North-West, Journal of Oral History. Vol 5. 1977, p. 12.
29. Roberts. A Woman's Place. p. 156.
30. Oddy, "Working Class Diets". Economic History Review, 2nd Ser. XXIII. 1970.
31. Hostettler. "Making Do" in Davidoff & Westover (eds.) Our Work, Our Lives. Our Words. p. 45.
32. Roberts. A Woman's Place, pp. 151-161.
33. Ibid.. p. 161.
34. Ibid.
35. See footnote 2. Chapter 5c.
36. Roberts. A Woman's Place. (Oxford 1984) p. 131.
37. Ibid., p. 132.
38. Ibid.. p. 125.
39. Ibid., p. 137.
40. Roberts. "Women's Strategies 1890-1940". in Jane Lewis (ed) Labour and Love. (1986) p. 230.

41. Ibid., p. 231.
42. Ibid., p. 223.
43. Ibid.
44. cf. Andrew Davies, "Leisure in the Classic Slum," in (eds.) Davies and Fielding, Workers Worlds (Manchester 1992, pp. 114-118; Meacham, A Life Apart, (1977) p. 93; Roberts, A Woman's Place, (1984) p. 115.
45. Fowler, "Teenage Consumers" in (eds) Davies and Fielding, Workers Worlds, (Manchester 1992) p. 133.
46. H. James & F. Moore. "Adolescent Leisure in a Working-Class District", Occupational Psychology, XIV, 3, 1940, p. 133; Meacham, A Life Apart, (1977) p. 55.
47. Spring Rice, Working-class Wives, (1934) Introduction, p.iv.
48. Ibid., p. 28.
49. Roberts, A Woman's Place, (Oxford 1984) pp. 106-108.
50. Gittens, "Marital Status, Work and Kinship 1850-1930" in (ed.) Lewis, Labour and Love, (1986) p. 265.
51. Roberts, A Woman's Place, (Oxford 1984) p. 169.
52. Ibid., p. 182.
53. Ibid., p. 171.
54. Newby, Country Life, (1987) p. 81.
55. cf. Liddington and Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (1978).
56. Cadbury, Women's Work and Wages (1906).
57. Mrs. AK.
58. Roberts, "Women's Strategies" in (ed.) Lewis, Labour and Love, (1986) p. 223.

APPENDIX A

The interviews were detailed in order to construct as accurate a picture as possible of each household. Respondents often touched upon other topics than the following, and, as noted in the introduction, these "digressions" often provided the most interesting material. It was found that it was important to keep the interview situation spontaneous and not merely a response to a questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE

BASIC INFORMATION

Respondent's name and address.

Date of birth, birthplace.

Number of siblings.

Father's occupation. Did he own any land?

Mother's occupation: Before marriage, after marriage.

Description of house(s) in which you grew up: number of rooms, cooking, washing, heating, lighting and toilet facilities. Did the house accommodate other relatives or lodgers? (In large families) how did your family cope with overcrowding? Sleeping arrangements. How many children shared a bed? Did any children sleep at the grandparents' house? Was the house owned or rented? If rented, was the housing tied to your father's employment? Did the family move, and, if so, was the move within the village or to another village? The purpose of the move (for example, better housing, change of employment).

HOUSEWORK

Description of jobs within the house: cleaning, cooking, preparing meat and vegetables, washing up, lighting fires, decorating, and repairs. Who did what? Did the father and children have any special household jobs? Who fetched the water? How far away was the water tap or well? Toilet facilities. Description of washday: Was the washhouse shared, and if so by how many families? Was there anyone to help your mother with the washing? Did your mother take in washing?

MEALS

What did the family usually eat and drink? How many courses were usual and what did they consist of? Did the family sit down together for meals. If as children you left any food uneaten on the plate, what was your parents' attitude? Was the Sunday meal different? Did the family keep any livestock (hens, pigs, rabbits?) Did the family belong to a pig club? How many pigs were kept? Who looked after them? Can you remember the pig being killed? How was the meat preserved? How many times a week did the family eat meat? How was meat divided between the family? Did the family grow its own vegetables and

fruit? Did your mother bake bread, make jam, bottle fruit or vegetables, make pickles, or medicines? Who made the wine and cider? Where was it stored? How big was the garden and what was grown in it? Did the family have an allotment; if so, who tended it and what was grown?

PARENTIAL INFLUENCE AND DISCIPLINE

If you did something which your parents disapproved of, how were you punished? Who did the punishing? Do you remember any particular incidents? Did neighbours or other villagers punish you as a child? Did you have aunts, uncles or grandparents in the village? Where did you play? When was it bathnight? Where did the family have their bath?

RELIGION

How did you spent Sundays? Did you have special Sunday clothes? Did your parents attend church or chapel? Did your parents hold any office or help in the church or chapel? Did you go to Sunday School? Sunday school outings. Were prayers said at home?

BUDGET AND CONTROL OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Who managed the household income? Did your father give his earnings to your mother to manage? Did he receive pocket money? Did the children give their earnings to their mother? Were they allowed to keep some as pocket money? Who made or mended the family's clothes? Were clothes bought new or secondhand? Were clothes passed down? Did your mother have a sewing machine? Did the family belong to any clothes clubs? Where did the family get their shoes and boots? How did your mother manage when money was scarce? Did the family ever have to get into debt to the local shop? What happened in times of illness or death? Who stepped in to help?

POLITICS

Did your parents take an interest in politics? Do you know how they voted? Did they belong to any political organisations? Did your mother express any interest in the women's suffrage movement?

LEISURE

How did your parents spend their leisure? Did your father attend any pubs or clubs? Did he invite friends to share cider in the shed? Was drinking a problem? Did your father play any sport? Did he belong to any organisations? Did your mother go out too? Did either of them take a holiday? Did you visit relatives? Did your mother belong to the WI or the Mothers' Union? Did they go on outings? Were people ever invited into the home?

SOCIAL CLASS

Did you feel that the village was divided into different social classes, and if so to which did your family belong? Was there anyone you called "Sir" or "Madam"? Who were the most important people in your village?

SCHOOL

At what age did you start school? Can you describe your village school? How did you feel about the teachers? What kind of disciplining did they employ? What lessons did you have? How long a journey did you have to school? How old were you when you left school? Did you take the scholarship examination? What opportunities were there when you left school? Did your parents discuss with you what you would like to do after leaving?

WORK

While you were at school, did you have any part-time jobs, or ways of earning money? How did you get your first full-time job? Can you remember what you were paid? Did you have to leave home? If so, how did you feel about that? Did you contribute to the family purse? What was your next job?

MARRIAGE

At what age were you married? How did you meet your husband/wife? Where did he/she come from? Did you save up money before getting married? How did you get a house? (If respondent female) What was your husband's job? Did you do any paid work after marriage - (part-time work). Did your mother do any paid work after she married? Did your grandmother do any paid work after she married?

APPENDIX B

RESPONDENTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Mrs. AB was born in 1909 in Blockley. She was an only child. Her father, the youngest of seven children, was a tenant farmer, but in addition ran a carriage and later car hire firm. He was also ticket agent for the railway. Her mother was apprenticed in shopwork. After her marriage, she ran a shop from home which also housed her husband's ticket agency for the Great Western Railway. Mrs. AB attended Campden grammar school as a fee-payer. She left at 17. She worked in her mother's shop and as chauffeur in father's firm. Her father owned his own five-bedroom house which contained the shop. It was inherited from Mrs. AB's grandfather who had been a baker. Parents' politics: politics were not spoken about. Family's religion: Church of England, but father Baptist.

Mrs. BB was born in 1900 in Snowhill. She was one of four children (one girl and three boys). One brother was an invalid for seven years. Her grandmother was bed-ridden for five years. Her father was a farm labourer. The family rented a one-up, one-down cottage, but later moved to a two-up, two-down cottage. Mrs. BB left school when she was not quite 14 to help at home as her mother was ill. She helped at the Manor House when in school. She was employed as third parlour maid Spring Hill Gardens. After she married in 1926, she lived in a tied cottage at Taddington, then in a rented cottage in Snowhill. Parents' politics: Liberal. Family's religion: Church of England.

Mr. AC was born in 1898 in Broadway. He was one of seven children (five boys, two girls). His father was a farm labourer. His mother was a land worker. After marriage she worked in the kitchen at Middle Hill. The family moved to Snowhill in 1906. Mr. AC left school on his 13th birthday. He was employed as garden boy at Middle Hill where his two sisters worked as servants, and his sister-in-law was cook. Mr. AC was a marksman in the Black and Tans after the First World War. He was later employed as a farm labourer. Parents' politics: Liberal. Family's religion: Church of England. Father was church clerk and gravedigger.

Mrs. BC was born in 1922 in Snowhill. She was one of three children, all girls. Her mother was one of 11 children. Her father was one of 13. Her father was a farm labourer, but, after he was crippled with arthritis, he helped her mother in the grocery shop which she inherited from her mother's family. Mrs. BC left school 14. She passed the scholarship examination, but could not afford to attend grammar school. She went into service as kitchen maid in Swindon, Birmingham, and Broadway.

After marriage she worked for an aunt helping at a guest house in Winchcombe. She later took over her parents' shop. Family's religion: Church of England.

Mr. AD was born in 1914 in Snowhill. He was one of four children. three boys and one girl. His father was one of nine children, his mother one of thirteen. His father was a groom, but later (for 40 years) was the gardener at Snowhill Manor. His mother worked on the land. The family rented a two-bedroom cottage. Mr. AD left school at 14. He worked at the furniture makers. Russells. in Broadway, then became garden boy at Springhill Gardens. After working as a farm labourer, and stable hand, he took over his father's work as gardener at Snowhill Manor. Family's religion: Church of England. Father clerk, mother church cleaner. Family's politics: his parents were Conservative. but Mr. AD voted Labour once to spite the boss.

Mrs. BD was born in 1914 in Willersey. She was one of five, three boys and two girls. Her mother was from Campden, her father from Pebworth. Her father was foreman of a nursery. Later he bought market gardening land as well. Mrs. BD left school at 14 and went into the nursery. She married a skilled worker at Russells in 1937, and did not work after marriage. She looked after her widowed father, two brothers and an apprentice. Her husband was one of nine. eight boys and one girl. His mother was widowed when he was seven. She kept the family by renting rooms, and paid for her son to be apprenticed at Gordon Russell. Religion: Church of England, but Mrs. BD's husband was Catholic. Family's politics - Conservative.

Mrs. AE was born in 1900 in Norfolk. She was one of five (including two stepchildren), two boys, and three girls. She left school at 13 and went into service. While in service she moved to Willersey in 1919. She ended her career as a cook. She married a market gardener in 1921. Her husband rented his gardening land, and also did seasonal work for farmers. Mrs. AE helped cut and tie the asparagus. They rented cottage from father-in-law, and then built their own bungalow in 1920s. Their eldest girl passed the scholarship examination, but did not go to grammar school. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Miss BE was born in 1901 in Cannock Chase. Staffordshire. Her father was from Broadway. She was one of eight children, four boys and four girls. The family moved to Laverton in 1912 so that her father could settle her grandfather's farm. They then moved to Elmley Castle where the family ran the Mill Inn. Elmley Castle. They later moved to Bricklehampton Hall Farm. Miss BE became a teacher. Her father's people were teachers. She attended Bricklehampton school until nearly 16 and then

became a pupil teacher there. She studied in the evenings. Miss BE continued teaching at Pershore until she retired. She was church organist. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AF was born in 1913 in Bretforton. She was one of eight children, four boys and four girls. Her father was a market gardener. Mrs. AF went to grammar school. She left at 17 with a prize for being best pupil in the school. She intended to go into teaching but her father died suddenly at 40. Her youngest sister was six weeks old. Her mother carried on with the market garden and her brother-in-law took charge of the bookkeeping. Other uncles advised her until her sons eventually took over. Mrs. AF started to train as a nurse, but later entered Civil Service (Internal Revenue) at Evesham. Owing to the marriage bar she had to leave when she married in 1936. Family politics: mother's family Liberal, all the rest of the family were Conservative, except her father who voted Labour after the First World War. Family's religion - Church of England.

Mr. BF was born in 1914 in Broadway. One of two children, both boys. His father was a carter and contract worker. His grandfather was a farmer from Buckland. Her father was one of ten. His maternal grandfather brought his family to Broadway from Scotland. His mother was a dress-maker; she employed three girls. She made clothes for the big houses in Broadway and some of the other villages. She also took in lodgers. His father died fairly young. Mr. BF left school at 14. His mother, a great reader, wanted him to go to grammar school, but he refused and went into butchering. Family's religion: Church of England, but parents not church goers. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AG was born in 1920 in Wickhamford. One of five children, three boys, two girls. Her father was from Evesham. He worked for a market gardener, and later became a building labourer. Mother from Brickleyhampton in service. Her mother sometimes worked fruit and pea picking. The family moved from a rented cottage to a council house in 1921. Mrs. AG left school at 14 after being head girl and went into service. She left service to work in a munitions factory 1941. She returned to domestic work after she married. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: father Liberal, mother not interested.

Mrs. BG was born in 1896 in Withington near Hereford. One of seven children, three girls, two boys. She left school at 14 and went into service, first as a scullery maid and then as a housemaid. While in service she moved to Middle Hill, Broadway. She married a Broadway man in 1925. Her husband worked at his father's cider mill and on his father's market garden (on council land). He later worked on some of his own land as well. They waited for council houses to be built before they could

marry. Mrs. BG helped on land picking crops and tying asparagus. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AH was born in 1929 in Broadway. (She is the daughter of Mrs. BG). One of two children, both girls. She won a scholarship to grammar school, and hoped to go to art college, but father could not afford it. She worked as a secretary. She worked in a bank and in the council offices, but had to give up job when the servicemen returned at end of war.

Mrs. BH was born in 1916 in Hull. She married and moved to Evesham in 1939. Her husband was born in Badsey. His family kept the Swan Inn, Evesham. They lived above the pub. Her father-in-law was also a market gardener with his own land. Several members of family were publicans. Her husband and his sister ran the Rose and Crown, Evesham. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AI was born in 1906 in Draycott (a mile from Blockley). Her father married twice. His first family comprised six children, five girls and one boy. His second family (Mrs. AI's family) comprised four boys and one girl. Her father was a tenant farmer. Her mother, a farmer's daughter born in 1875, was one of 12 children. Her mother was employed as housekeeper after her father's first wife died. Mrs. AI's father was a keen reader. Her step-sister was a teacher. Mrs. AI gained a scholarship to grammar school, as did all the rest of the family. She left at 18 after Matriculation. She trained to be teacher at Goldsmith's College though her mother would have preferred she was home helping. She took a two-year teacher-training course. She met her husband who was taking degree course there. She finished college in 1927. Family's politics: Conservative. Family's religion: Father Church of England, mother Baptist.

Miss BI was born in 1915 in Broadway. One of three children, two boys and one girl. Her father started as a small farmer but was forced to move from the farm in 1920. He later owned a lorry and did carting, and was finally employed as lorry driver at Gordon Russell. Father one of 13 children. Her mother was a dress-maker. After Miss BI's father had a stroke (he was an invalid until his death nine years later) her mother took in lodgers. Miss BI left school at 14. She worked as a shop assistant until retirement. Family's politics: Conservative. Family's religion: Catholic.

Mr. AJ was born in 1917 in Lower Quinton. The family later moved to Mickleton. One of six children, one boy and five girls. His father was a market gardener. He rented his land from council. He was wounded in First World War. Mr. AJ's

mother was from family of nine, his father from family of eight. His father died at 43 in 1933. His uncles carried on market garden. Mr. AJ left school at 14. He worked for his father and then his uncles. Four sisters went into service, but one went to grammar school until 16 and worked in office. His mother worked as domestic when widowed. She also had an income from her husband's share in the market garden. Family's politics: Conservative. Family's religion - Church of England. C of E.

Miss BJ was born in 1913 in Broadway. One of 11 children. Her parents also raised a cousin and a nephew. Her father was a farm labourer. Her mother took in washing and assisted the doctor and the undertaker delivering babies, tending the sick, and laying out the dead. Miss BJ left school at 14 and went into service as a scullery maid. She later worked as a cook at Buckland Manor for 23 years. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: mother Conservative, father not interested in politics but had Liberal sympathies.

Mrs. AK was born in 1920 in Willersey, but was raised in Saintbury. One of four children, two girls, and two boys. Her father, from Birmingham, was employed on his father-in-law's market garden. The land was rented. Her mother, from Saintbury, was employed as an undercook in a large house near Birmingham before she married. She married the cook's son. Mrs. AK's mother helped support the family by sewing shirts for the monks at Broadway. She also made rafia mats, tended the sick and dying and helped deliver babies. The family lived the grandfather, a widower. Mrs. AK's mother worked on the grandfather's land when he was too old to manage it so that two of her children could go to grammar school. Family's politics: mother's politics unknown, father in later years Labour. Mrs. MC left school at 14 and went into domestic service in Broadway as kitchen maid. At 18 she became cook-housekeeper for Lady Forrester.

Mrs. BK was born in Bourton-on-Water in 1902. One of seven children, 3 girls, and 4 boys. Her father was a baker. The family moved to Broadway in 1904 where her father's family lived. Her father had his own bakery in Broadway; her mother ran a tea-room and small sweet and tobacco shop. The business employed three people. Her mother also took in lodgers. Mrs. BK's grandfather, a shoe-repairer, and grandmother who kept a greengrocery, lived next-door. Mrs. BK left school at 13. She worked in the family shop and stayed there until she was 71. She married one of her mother's lodgers. Her husband came from London and worked as cabinet maker for Gordon Russells. Family's religion: the family did not attend church as they were occupied on Sunday with the tea rooms. Mrs. BK's husband was Jewish.

Mr. AL was born in 1913 in Newham on Severn. One of four children. all boys. His father. from Leicestershire. was coachman to Sir John Guys. He met his wife. from Buckland. in London where he was working. His mother worked at the Royal Free Hospital where she had been employed since she was 13. She did paid domestic work after marriage (cooking, cleaning and caretaker at the school). His grandparents were from Buckland. His grandmother delivered babies, laid people out, and took in washing. His grandfather. a drunkard, died young. The family moved to Laverton where Mr. AL's father worked as a groom for Mr. Scott at the Buckland Manor. Mr. AL left school at 14 and worked as farm labourer, then as a gardener at the Lygon Arms, Broadway. In order to get a tied cottage he worked as groom at Temple Guiting when he married in 1934. He then moved back to Laverton and worked as a farm labourer on Buckland estate. His wife did cleaning and cooking for Lady Forrester and helped her mother with her laundry work which her mother continued to do until she was 95.

Mrs. BL (wife of Mr. AL) was born in 1911 in Childswickham. She was one of thirteen children, 10 boys. and three girls. Her father was an odd-job man at Buckland Manor. The family later moved to Buckland. Her mother did gloving, Mrs. BL helped when she came home from school. She was often kept home from school to help with the other children. which led to problems with the attendance officer. She left school at 13 to look after the family and do gloving. Some of the boys worked on the railway, one helped the blacksmith, others employed as odd-job men at Buckland Manor, girls went into service. Family's religion: attended both church and chapel. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AM was born in 1925 in Childswickham. She was one of two girls. Her father was a market gardener. Her grandfather on her mother's side owned his own land. Her father was one of seven, her mother was one of eight. Her mother did gloving. Her father worked for another market gardener after leaving the army after the First World War. He gradually bought land of his own in the 1930s and rented other land from the council. Mrs. AM left school at 15. After village school she attended Blackminster Secondary Modern school Badsey. She wanted to specialise in cooking at Gloucester Technical College but she was unable due to the war. She went on the land, and was then apprenticed as hairdresser, Broadway. After marriage she did domestic work. Family's religion: father Church of England, but Mrs. AM also attended Chapel. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. BM was born in 1931 in Childswickham. She was one of four children. Her father was a market gardener in Badsey. Her mother did gloving. Her grandfather died when her father was ten. Her grandmother, left with 11 children, carried on the

market garden until boys old enough to take over. Mrs. BM left school at 14. She worked in an office in Evesham. Family's religion: Chapel. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AN was born in 1904 in Childswickham. She was one of three children, one girl and two boys. Her father was a farm labourer, then a market gardener. He rented his land. Her mother did gloving both before and after marriage. She worked on the land in the summer. Mrs. AN did gloving after she left school at 13. She married in 1924. Her husband was a market gardener. She was widowed when the youngest child was 11. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. BN was born in 1932 at Leedons, between Childswickham and Broadway. She was one of four, two girls, and two step-brothers. Her father, born in Stroud, came to Broadway as a hunt servant with North Cotswold Hunt. Her mother married twice. Her first husband died from accident during the First World War. Her mother's father was a market gardener. He owned several cottages in Childswickham. Her mother had small-holding when she remarried and her husband became a market gardener. Her mother and grandmother did gloving. Mrs. BN's parents separated. The family moved to Childswickham where her mother looked after her parents. Mrs. BN went to the village school and then Blackminster Secondary Modern. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mr. AO was born in 1910 in Broadway. He was one of nine, five girls, four boys. His father was a farm labourer, who was later employed at Gordon Russells, where grandfather had started the Lygon Arms furniture repair business with a Mr. Turner and Gordon Russell (later Gordon Russells furniture factory). His mother moved from London to Broadway while in service. After marriage her mother helped as midwife and laid out the dead, and did domestic work. All five girls went into service. Mr. AO's grandmother in London had serious accident and came to live with them later. Mr. AO left school 14 and worked as garden boy at Russell House. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Father Liberal.

Mrs. BO (married to Mr. AO) was born in 1923 in Broadway. She was one of four, one girl, three boys. Her father was a milkman, later builder and decorator. Mother came from Birmingham where she had worked in bag workshop. She met her husband when on holiday. Her mother was employed fruit picking and cleaning after marriage. Mrs. BO left school at 14. She obtained a scholarship to the domestic science school in Gloucester. She took up children's nursing, but wanted to do regular nursing. Her daughter is now a nurse.

Mrs. AP was born in 1917 in Badsey. One of five, two girls, three boys (one step-brother). Her grandfather and his brother had worked in America towards the end of the 19th century. He came back, married, and bought a house and land with the money he had earned there. Grandmother formerly in service. Grandfather died at 46 leaving family of ten children. Mrs. AP's father a great reader but had to go to work in the market garden. Her mother died of influenza 1918. Her mother's sister came to look after family, later married her father. Her aunt did gloving and worked on the land. All her brothers went into family market garden. Mrs. AP won a scholarship to grammar school. She worked in a bank in Evesham, and was the first woman to go on the counter (in World War II when men were away).

Miss BP was born in 1915 in Gloucester. One of two children, one boy, one girl. Her father was a teacher in the army during First World War. Later headmaster of a school in Dursley. Her mother trained as a milliner, then ran father's pram shop before she married. Father appointed headmaster at Merstow Green School in Evesham. Miss BP left Prince Henry's Grammar School, Evesham at 17 and attended St. Mary's Teachers Training College, Cheltenham where she trained as an infant teacher, two-year course. In addition to her father, her uncles and aunts were teachers on both sides of family. She taught a probation year at Bradley Green, then taught at Badsey School. Family's religion: Church of England (Merstow Green was a Church of England school). Miss BP was a Sunday School teacher. Her father was church warden.

Miss AQ was born in 1902 in Broadway. One of 2 children, one boy, one girl. Her father, born in Broadway, started his bakery in 1904. He started his training in bakery at ten years of age. Her mother was a district nurse from Chipping Campden. Her mother worked in the baker's shop after marriage. The bakery started when railway was opening so it enjoyed good trade. Miss AQ left the village school when she was 13. She wanted to be a nurse but during the First World War labour was short and she was needed to deliver the bread. Her brother worked in the bakehouse. Her father started as a tenant, but bought the shop and accommodation over it in 1926. Miss AQ took book-keeping at evening school in Evesham and kept the shop books. Family's religion: Church of England. Father church warden. Family politics: Conservative. Miss AQ was secretary to the Broadway Conservative Committee.

Mr. BQ was born in 1905 in Fladbury. One of four boys. His father was a market gardener and rate collector. He later bought own land and specialised in producing plums and honey. His mother was in domestic service before she married. His father was from Ilmington; he came to Fladbury as coachman for Rev. Campbell. His mother died in 1914. His father remarried,

and Mr. BQ went to live with his aunt. He left school at 11 to work for his father. He later had his own land. Family religion: Church of England. Family politics: father Liberal, mother not interested.

Mrs. AR was born in Cropthorne in 1909. One of six children, three boys, and three girls. Her father, an enterprising market gardener from Hinton-on-the-Green, gradually bought land. He bought own house with post office attached. Mrs. AR's mother ran the post office. Mrs. AR left school at 13 and helped her mother and elder sister in the post office. She later took a job as nanny with a family in Evesham and helped with their cycle shop. She also worked at the Waterside dairy, Evesham before her marriage. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. BR was born in 1905 in Childswickham. One of 3 girls. Her father was formerly a carter, later a market gardener. Her mother did gloving. Mrs. BR left school at 13 and went on the land. Her eldest sister worked on the land, and her second sister did gloving. Her second sister married a chauffeur from Broadway. His mother was widowed and his two-year old sister came to live with them. His wife died of TB, leaving a blind baby which his mother-in-law raised. He continued to work for his mother-in-law after she was widowed. In 1945 he married Mrs. BR, his former wife's sister. Mrs. BR continued to work on the land, took in washing and did domestic work. She looked after her mother. Family's religion: Church of England. Family's politics: Conservative.

Mrs. AS was born in 1922 in Childswickham. One of two children, one girl, and one boy. Her maternal grandfather was the village blacksmith. Her parents inherited their cottage which had been in the family for years, but in the depression they were forced to sell to the council who gave them a life tenancy. Her father was from a market gardening family in Badsey. One of ten children. Mrs. AS's grandmother died within a few months of the birth of her last child. Two uncles were sent to relatives in Canada at 14 because the family could not afford to feed them. Mrs. AS's father moved to Childswickham when he married and rented land from council. Her mother did gloving and fruit picking. Mrs. AS left school at 14. She worked in a grocer's shop in Broadway and helped support her brother who went to Blackminster Secondary Modern School and later Cheltenham Technical College. Family's religion: Church of England, but also attended Chapel. Politics: Father Conservative, mother Liberal.

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